# dissent

$3.50/Summer 1983

IRVING HOWE
Central America
—*Cry Halt!*

JOSEPH CLARK
Chicago Changes
the Agenda

BERNARD ROSENBERG
The U.S.A. and
the UAW

JOHN C. CORT
The Bishops Stay
the Course

MICHAEL WALZER
**On Failed Totalitarianism**

ROBERT B. REICH
**Human Capital & Economic Policy**

SIMON LEYS
The Death of
Lin Biao

JUAN E. CORRADI
El Salvador:
A Culture of Fear

HAROLD R. ISAACS
Re-encounters
in China

JENNIFER G. SCHIRMER
Legalizing Repres-
sion in Chile

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MITCHELL COHEN teaches political science at Baruch College, CUNY, is editor of the labor Zionist journal *Jewish Frontier*, and is at work on a study of the Marxism of Lucien Goldmann.

J. J. CONLEY teaches psychology at Wesleyan University.

JUAN E. CORRADI, who was educated in Argentina and the U.S., is teaching sociology at New York University. He is the author of *Ideology and Social Change in Latin America* and of a forthcoming book, tentatively entitled *The Making and Breaking of Argentina*.

JOHN C. CORT is a coeditor of *Religious Socialism*, publication of the Religion and Socialism Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America.

HENRY C. FLEISHER is a Washington publicist who has specialized in labor affairs.

ULF HIMMELSTRAND, a Swedish sociologist who teaches at Uppsala University, is a former president of the International Association of Sociology (1978-82) and the main author of *Beyond Welfare Capitalism: Issues, Actors and Forces of Societal Change* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

HAROLD R. ISAACS is professor emeritus of political science at M.I.T. His books include: *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* • *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* • *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change*.

PHILIP KASINITZ, who teaches sociology at New York University, is writing on gentrification and ethnic conflict in Brooklyn.

SIMON LEYS—pen name of a distinguished scholar of Chinese painting and literature who teaches at an Australian University—is a long-time contributor to *Dissent* and the author of *Broken Images: Essays on Chinese Culture & Politics*, of *Chinese Shadows*, and other books.

LOUIS MENAND teaches in the English Department at Princeton University.

ALLAN C. ORNSTEIN teaches education and social policy at Loyola University of Chicago. He is the author of many texts, including (with Daniel U. Levine) *Introduction to the Foundations of Education*.

ROBERT B. REICH, author of *The Next American Frontier* and a contributing editor of the *New Republic*, teaches at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

KAREN ROSENBERG, a free-lance writer, is a fellow at Harvard University's Russian Research Center.

OLIVIER ROY, a frequent contributor to *Esprit* (Paris) whose articles on Afghanistan have appeared in our pages, has degrees both in philosophy and Asian languages. Since 1969 he has visited Afghanistan many times.

JENNIFER G. SCHIRMER, a social anthropologist and postdoctoral fellow at the Center for European Studies of Harvard University, has traveled extensively and lived both in Western Europe and Latin America.

SANFORD SCHWARTZ is the author of *The Art Presence: Painters, Writers, Photographers, Sculptors*.

JERRY G. WATTS teaches American politics in the Afro-American Studies Program at the University of California, Davis. He is at work on a book of essays, tentatively entitled "Outside the Margin: Reflections on a Pariah People."

JAY WEISER, a second-generation American Jew in his twenties, is a lawyer with the New York City Public Development Corporation and a fan of Sid Caesar. □

DISSENT (ISSN 0012-3846), issued July 1, 1983, is published quarterly, winter, spring, summer, and fall, by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Subscriptions: $14.00 for one year; $25.00 for two years; $9.00 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $3.00 for mailing costs per year; institutional rate $19.00 per year, $35.00 for two years, single copy $3.50. All payments from foreign countries must be made by United States money orders or checks payable in United States currency. Single copy, $3.50. For special rates on bulk orders from organizations, teachers, etc., write directly to DISSENT. For information on newsstand and bookstore distribution write to: Eastern News Co., 155 West Fifteenth Street, New York, N.Y. 10001.

© 1983 by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc. (FSISI). Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the publishers. • Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. • Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. • Volume 30, Number 3 (whole No. 132).

• DISSENT does not engage in lobbying nor support candidates or legislation.

Front Cover Design by Robert Schwartz

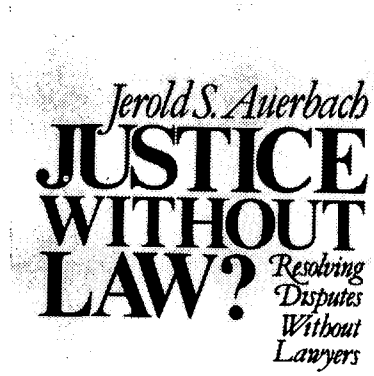


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Oxford

## Justice Without Law?

JEROLD S. AUERBACH




*by the Author of UNEQUAL JUSTICE*

"Five hundred years from now," writes Jerold Auerbach, "when historians sift through twentieth-century artifacts, they doubtlessly will have as little comprehension of American legal piety as most Americans now display toward medieval religious zeal. The analogy is illuminating: the courtroom is our cathedral, where contemporary passion plays are enacted."

Why *are* Americans the most legalistic and litigious people in the world? What does that say about our values, our ideals, the quality of our social relationships? What are the benefits to our society? And what is the price we pay?

These are among the questions that Auerbach considers in *Justice Without Law?*, the first history of dispute settlement in the United States. Auerbach explores the variety of alternatives to litigation that have existed throughout our history—within religious, utopian, ethnic, and even business communities. He shows that justice without law was a living reality for many groups of Americans during three centuries of our history. Their choice of alternatives represented radically different social values from those that most Americans now cherish. We see how litigation came to express the aggressive competition, individualism, and materialism that American society esteems. But we also learn what is lost: the sense of community coherence and sharing that alternatives to litigation express.

**Jerold S. Auerbach** is Professor of History at Wellesley College, Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Law School, and author of the highly acclaimed *Unequal Justice.*

**$16.95 , 224 pp., 6 x 9**

*Early Comments:*

"This lively and penetrating exploration illuminates the complex relationship between law and community... It recaptures for us many lost and hidden aspects of our legal experience and it provides an invaluable historical vantage for understanding current proposals for alternatives to law."

—Marc Galanter
*University of Wisconsin*

"Americans have been spending much thought and money lately in a search for efficient ways to resolve disputes without having to rely on their expensive and cumbersome legal institutions. Professor Auerbach says it won't work.... In the same lucid and comprehensive prose Professor Auerbach displayed in *Unequal Justice,* he argues that the solution is not to find justice outside the law, but to accept the law and then try to change it from inside. This is a very important book because it suggests that otherwise well-intentioned people are trying to solve the right problem in the wrong way."

—Stephen Gillers
*New York University*

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

200 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# A MARGIN OF HOPE

## AN INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

# IRVING HOWE

**IRVING HOWE** — esteemed literary critic and author of the bestselling *World of Our Fathers* — looks back on his life and times over the past five decades. A candid, perceptive account of his growth to intellectual manhood within the political movements and literary influences that shaped American culture.

HBJ

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
1250 Sixth Avenue
San Diego, CA 92101

"... A truly riveting memoir ... Affectionately ironic, Talmudically restless, tender yet tough-minded: an incomparable blend of street-corner charm and knotty intellectual history — which can be read with pleasure ..."

— *Kirkus Reviews*

"The tracing of [Howe's] personal political ideology consequently reconstructs the history in general of New York liberalism in the modern era ... Eloquent and deep."

— *Booklist*

Available at your local bookstore in late October

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# AT FIRST GLANCE

## Lewis Coser

When Voltaire was asked why he kept a Bible on his night table, he replied: "You have to know your enemies." I subscribe to *Commentary* on this Voltairean principle. As a result I got onto the mailing list of Midge Decter's *Committee for the Free World*. I must confess looking forward to receiving their periodic appeals; they provide comic relief in otherwise often drab and depressing times.

Their latest release, dated April 1, is a honey. "According to the pollsters," they say, "there is large and growing public support for a nuclear freeze.... Politicians, who must be sensitive to popular feeling, have joined in the call for cuts in the defense budget." Things, it appears, fall apart; the Reagan center cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. But be of good cheer nevertheless, argues Midge Decter: all these public opinion polls shouldn't interfere with the serious business of rekindling the flames of the Cold War. Don't believe the experts who discern a shift in public opinion in regard to the arms buildup. "Their theories about popular opinion are almost as dangerous to our national security as a nuclear freeze or a significant cut in the defense budget would be. The truth is that people are not fickle but confused...."

The defenders of the Free World are a strange variety of democrats. If the polls support their stand, more power to the people. If the polls indicate that people have become skeptical, don't listen to the vox populi. The people polled are just a bunch of ignorant boobs led by the nose by unscrupulous and unpatriotic agitators who fraudulently claim to be "experts."

"False and dangerous ideas circulate through the culture."

"... the people who govern us, Democrats and Republicans, have lost confidence in themselves and us."

The *Committee for the Free World* is getting hysterical and paranoid. Good for us! There is still hope in the land when the Cold Warriors, who only a short time ago seemed in the ascendancy, get panicky. I hope that they'll continue sending me their appeals.

The American Enterprise Institute, a brother under the skin of Midge Decter's outfit, also is worried. A few months ago they arranged a meeting in Washington, D.C., chaired by Michael Novak, author of the recently published book *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. He too was worried about the deplorable lack of Reaganite stamina among the American people. The widespread antagonism toward business, he argued, "is a formidable danger to democratic capitalism," which, he thinks, is "more likely to perish" through a loss of faith in its "ideas and morals than through weaknesses in its political system or its economic system." Cheer up, readers of *Dissent*; if people are losing faith not only in the Cold War but even in American business, things can't be as bad as we are sometimes, in our fits of despondency, inclined to believe.

□

Another bit of cheerful news comes from Europe. The various Communist parties throughout Western Europe are fast losing significant influence and votes. They recently have experienced major declines and are no longer a major political factor to be reckoned with. The Communist camp in Western Europe is breaking up. In Spain, even though they still control one of the two major trade unions, the CP suffered disastrous losses in the elections that brought the Socialists to power. In Mitterrand's France, the Communists also lost heavily in the recent municipal elections, and have been humiliated by being given utterly unimportant positions in the reconstituted government; they have lost any support whatsoever in intellectual circles. In German politics, the CP is an insignificant fringe sect. It has only marginal importance in the politics of Norway and Sweden and in the Low Countries. The CP will probably be soundly defeated by the Socialists in the forthcoming Portuguese elections. And it is badly split both in Greece and in Finland. Just as there is no longer a "red belt" around Paris, there is no longer a genuinely

*(Continued on page 386)*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**"EITHER REICH'S IDEAS REPRESENT THE FUTURE OR AMERICA HAS NONE."**
—*New York* Magazine

**"One of the most significant works of the decade."**
—Walter F. Mondale

*"A tremendously valuable piece of work."* —Irving Howe

"Few books on economics are **bold** enough to capture one's imagination. This is one." —U.S. Senator Gary Hart

**"A provocative and compelling book. It is likely to be controversial. It could not be more timely."**—Daniel Yergin

photograph: Christopher Morrow

**THE NEXT AMERICAN FRONTIER**

**ROBERT B. REICH**

**Serialized in *The Atlantic***
**A Main Selection of the Fortune Book Club**
**A Book-of-the-Month Club Alternate Selection**

Times BOOKS


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# SUMMER 1983

dissent



275 AT FIRST GLANCE *by Lewis Coser*

## COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

279 CENTRAL AMERICA—*CRY HALT! by Irving Howe* . . . CHICAGO CHANGES THE AGENDA *by Joseph Clark* . . . THE BISHOPS STAY THE COURSE *by John C. Cort* . . . LEGALIZED REPRESSION IN CHILE *by Jennifer G. Schirmer* . . . THE U.S.A. AND THE UAW *by Bernard Rosenberg* . . . FROM A MACNEIL-LEHRER INTERVIEW WITH *DOUGLAS FRASER*

## ARTICLES

297 ON FAILED TOTALITARIANISM
*by Michael Walzer*

307 HUMAN CAPITAL & ECONOMIC POLICY
*by Robert B. Reich*

317 THE DEATH OF LIN BIAO
*by Simon Leys*

322 RE-ENCOUNTERS IN CHINA
*by Harold R. Isaacs*

329 SWEDEN: TOWARD ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY
*by Ulf Himmelstrand*

337 NEO-MARXIST VIEWS OF THE STATE
*by Philip Kasinitz*

347 "IT JUST AIN'T RIGHTEOUS": ON WITNESSING BLACK CROOKS AND WHITE COPS *by Jerry G. Watts*

354 LIBERALISM WITHOUT THE IMAGINATION: REMARKS ON POLITICS AND CULTURE *by Louis Menand*

360 I WALKED WITH INTELLECTUALS
*by Sanford Schwartz*

366 DECLINE OF THE FROSTBELT
*by Allan C. Ornstein*

## NOTEBOOK

375 STABILITY & CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE *by Bogdan Denitch* . . . THE RESISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN *by Olivier Roy* . . . AN AUTUMNAL LOVE OF EMMA GOLDMAN *by Karen Rosenberg* . . . RESEARCH CUTBACKS & CORPORATE SQUEEZE *by J. J. Conley* . . . CAESAR'S HOUR *by Jay Weiser*

## BOOKS

387 REVIEWS *by Juan E. Corradi, Mitchell Cohen, Henry C. Fleisher, George Eckstein*

399 **LETTERS**



EDITORS:
Irving Howe, Michael Walzer

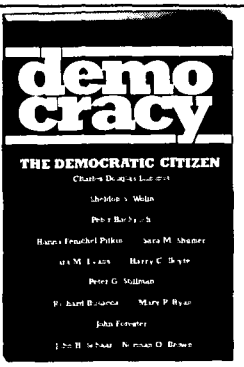
MANAGING EDITOR:
Edith H. Tarcov

BUSINESS MANAGER:
Simone Plastrik

EDITORIAL BOARD:
Bernard Avishai, David Bensman, Marshall Berman, H. Brand, David Bromwich, Joseph Buttinger, Luther Carpenter, Jack Clark, Joseph Clark, Jean L. Cohen, Lewis Coser, Rose Laub Coser, Bogdan Denitch, George Eckstein, Cynthia F. Epstein, Emanuel Geltman, Michael Harrington, Murray Hausknecht, Robert Heilbroner, Erazim Kohák, William Kornblum, Jeremy Larner, Robert Lekachman, Mark Levinson, Norman Mailer, Deborah Meier, Martin Peretz, Jack Rader, Ronald Radosh, James Rule, Ronnie Steinberg, Peter Steinfels, Bernard Rosenberg, Meyer Schapiro, Brendan Sexton, Patricia Cayo Sexton, Dennis Wrong



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




**democracy** is the quarterly journal that considers questions of political theory and history for both the citizen and the scholar.

Some recent contributors

**Joyce Appleby**
**Norman O. Brown**
**Walter Dean Burnham**
**Richard A. Cloward**
**Carlos Fuentes**
**Lawrence Goodwyn**
**Philip Green**
**Christopher Hill**
**Ivan Illich**
**Mary Kaldor**
**Christopher Lasch**
**Julius Lester**
**Staughton Lynd**
**Arno J. Mayer**
**Hanna Fenichel Pitkin**
**Frances Fox Piven**
**Joel Rogers**
**Mary P. Ryan**
**John H. Schaar**
**Sara Shumer**
**William Appleman Williams**
**Alan Wolfe**
**Sheldon S. Wolin**
**Larzer Ziff**

For 1983, **democracy** takes up the themes of Urban Prospects, Democracy and Technology, Alternatives for the Left, and Democracy and Education. Use the coupon to order a subscription or single issues.

democracy
43 West 61st Street
New York, NY 10023

☐ Please enter my subscription for one year. My check for $16 is enclosed.

☐ Please send me the current issue. My check for $4 is enclosed.

☐ Please send a complete listing of back issues, along with ordering information.

Name

Address

City State ZIP

**democracy** is published by the Common Good Foundation
Sheldon S. Wolin, Editor Max Palevsky, Publisher DS


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Irving Howe

# Central America — *Cry Halt!*

You don't have to be radical to see that a major disaster is building up in Central America. You only need some common sense.

Nor do you need to be a subtle thinker to recognize that the architect of this disaster is the Reagan administration—which reveals its deeply reactionary bias nowhere more clearly than in Central America:

A barely disguised and probably illegal intervention into the affairs of El Salvador and Nicaragua; propping up a government in El Salvador that tolerates (or fails to suppress) the terrorism of its own army; friendship with a military junta in Guatemala that spills quantities of blood (see the appalling details in Allan Nairn's "The Guns of Guatemala," *New Republic*, April 11, 1983); and a scheme for "destabilizing" a leftist regime in Nicaragua, which has indeed violated civil liberties (and refused to schedule elections) but is not yet a Castroite authoritarian dictatorship and looks like a spotless model of Jeffersonian democracy when compared with military juntas in Latin America to which Washington gives money and arms—all these are the familiar elements.

The consequences are frightening. One possible consequence is that Central America will be engulfed in a transnational civil war, with right-wing juntas backed by the United States fighting against authoritarian leftist guerrillas backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba. In such a case, the one certain loser would be democracy—never a big winner in Central America. Another possible consequence is that, as the "mere" shipment of arms and money to the right-wing juntas does not bring the "victory" for which the Reaganites pant, the U.S. will be tempted to send troops. And a third possible consequence is that in such countries as El Salvador, where neither side can win a clear-cut military victory, the bloodletting will continue endlessly—a sheer hell on earth.

Over the past two years we have printed a good deal of analytical material in *Dissent* about Latin America.* In this brief comment I don't propose to repeat that analysis; all that needs to be done now is to put down a few conclusions:

- If there is one part of the world where U.S. intervention is especially intolerable, it is Central America. The U.S. record in that part of the world —popularly and justly known as Yankee imperialism—is one of shameful bullying and exploitation. Everyone in Central America knows this, everyone resents it. For the U.S. now to help the remnants of the National Guard, which the thug-dictator Somoza used to terrorize the people in Nicaragua, is politically and morally obscene. (It's also an example of that deep stupidity which pervades the reactionary mind.) Such a policy can have only one result: it will rally support for the Nicaraguan

---

* *Summer 1981*: p. 285, Irving Howe, "Looking into El Salvador"; p. 280, Malcolm Coad, "Murder in Guatemala."

*Fall '81*: p. 425, Leon Wieseltier, "The Many Trials of Jacobo Timerman."

*Winter '82*: p. 13, Gabriel Zaid, "Enemy Colleagues: A Reading of the Salvadoran Tragedy."

*Spring '82*: p. 139, Emanuel Geltman, "El Salvador: Talk or Big Talk?"; p. 141, Stanley A. Gacek, "Repression in Brazil."

*Summer '82*: p. 285, Juan E. Corradi, "Argentina: A Story Behind a War"; p. 352, Phillip Berryman and Gabriel Zaid, "An Exchange on El Salvador."

*Fall '82*: p. 402, Octavio Paz, "Latin America and Democracy" (an excerpt).

*Winter '83*: p. 114, Mark J. Osiel, "Church Politics in Latin America.)

*Spring '83*: p. 151, Juan E. Corradi, "Reagan's Disasters in Latin America"; p. 217, Mark J. Osiel, "Agonies of *Abertura*: Brazil Moves, a Little, Toward Democracy."

See also: *Democracy and Dictatorship in Latin America*, an F.S.I.S.I. pamphlet devoted entirely to the voices and opinions of Latin American writers. 88 pp. $5.00. (See ad on the back cover.)



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regime among prodemocratic elements of the population, which, in more normal circumstances, might be sharply critical of its political methods.

With regard to Nicaragua the proper course is relatively simple: an immediate end to every kind of intervention; an effort to work out a modus vivendi with its government—one in which a turn by that government to easing domestic repression and adopting a nonaligned foreign policy could be met with substantial economic aid from the U.S.

• In El Salvador time is running out. For the past two years or so, moderate elements within the opposition—especially the Social Democrat Ungo who heads its political branch in exile—have kept saying they are prepared for unconditional negotiations. Are these statements sincere? There's a way of finding out, and that's to enter negotiations while setting in place a military truce. But both the El Salvador government and the Reagan administration have brushed aside such proposals, including those that came from adjacent democratic countries such as Mexico and Costa Rica. Now that the guerrillas have become militarily stronger, their price for a truce will no doubt be higher.

• Short of sending U.S. troops, there seems little chance for achieving that total "victory" for which the Reaganites lust. Now it would be facile to see the situation in Central America as merely a repetition of Vietnam. But there are also obvious similarities with Vietnam. One is that, when the Reaganite policies falter dramatically, there will be growing demands from within the government and the political right that we send troops in order to "Stop Communism."

• Even a short-range military triumph would bring disastrous political consequences. Large numbers of Central American patriots would in desperation shift allegiance to the guerrilla forces, if only because they wanted to resist Yankee intervention. The process of polarization would be sped up. The U.S. would have to maintain garrisons indefinitely if it hoped to maintain its domination. And there would not be a sign of lasting peace.

• As in Vietnam, it seems unlikely that—with a deteriorating situation—there can be a "good" solution in El Salvador. (By a "good" solution I mean something more or less within reach for that tormented nation: a modest democracy, a modest social reform.) El Salvador does have some genuine democrats, but they are frightened and, worse yet, their ranks are split between the two opposing camps in the civil war so that, at most, their influence is limited to checking extremists and killers on both sides.

• Simply, by now, to keep proposing negotiations and "dialogue" between the contending forces in El Salvador may be inadequate. As the civil war grows more bitter, the possibility for serious negotiations grows smaller.

This leaves one, admittedly frail, possibility: that the democratic countries of the area—Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela—be called in temporarily to El Salvador, with the consent of both sides, in order (a) to supervise a cease-fire, (b) to oversee the retirement of the army to its proper sphere in the barracks, (c) to arrange for the disarming of the terrorist gangs, (d) to make certain that neither side uses the truce in order to destroy the other, and

## Hunger & Malnutrition in the U.S.

*Washington, May 24* (UPI)—The number of people served at soup kitchens and similar emergency food programs in the United States grew dramatically last year, the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities reported today.

After surveying 181 emergency food programs, the center reported in more than half, the number of people served grew more than 50 percent from February 1982 to February 1983. More than a third of the programs surveyed doubled in size. . . .

Many of those seeking help . . . had run out of food stamps and 88 percent of the programs surveyed reported those served asked for aid because their stamps did not provide enough food to last the month. More than 80 percent of the agencies reported more people seeking help because their stamps had run out than a year earlier. . . . 75 percent of the programs reported serving more families with children than a year earlier. Nearly 25 percent . . . [had] to turn people away. . . . Two-thirds limited the number of times . . . [a] person could get food.

"This survey documents dramatic increases in the number of Americans needing food aid and suggests that hunger and inadequate nutrition may again be a growing problem in this country, Robert Greenstein, the director of the center, said." . . .

— *New York Times*, May 25, 1983 □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(e) to prepare for a genuinely democratic election in which all the contending parties can participate without fear of death.

• How likely is this course? We might as well admit, not very likely. But we see no other way of averting a catastrophe.

And let there be no doubt about it. The legacy of Reaganism in domestic affairs will be bad enough, but, after all, it will also be remediable through strong social action and legislation. But if the Reagan policy in Central America continues unchecked, it will lead to a disaster that cannot help but evoke the memory of Vietnam. □

Joseph Clark

# Chicago Changes the Agenda

The agenda for the 1984 presidential election has changed suddenly and drastically. What happened was Chicago. Black participation in all aspects of American governance and the continuing problem of equal rights landed in the center of the American political scene. As the slow and painfully achieved results of affirmative action are being demolished by the Reagan administration, the message from Chicago is that American blacks (along with Hispanics and women, too) will be voting on this matter in 1984.

Whereas the cry till now has been that the electoral process was withering away for lack of voter participation, 82 percent of Chicago's registered voters went to the polls. This is a striking figure when compared with the 53 percent who turned out for the presidential election of 1980. The key to the victory of Mayor Harold Washington was an outpouring of blacks, first in an unprecedented voter registration campaign, then for victory in the primary—a three-way race made that possible—and on to the final triumph when a majority of voters gave the Second City its first black mayor.

The far-reaching impact of the Chicago mayoralty election became manifest in a *New York Times* headline just a week after the Chicago results came in: "KOCH TO FILL MORE CITY JOBS WITH BLACK AND HISPANIC WORKERS." Five years in office had not been enough to move Mayor Koch toward recognizing that city government, too, requires not just consent, but representation. During the Chicago campaign mention was made many times that it is the most segregated city in the country. But it takes only a quick visit to the Windy City to learn that New York lags far behind Chicago in the matter of integrated office-holding. So the windy mayor of New York was only reading the Chicago election returns when he suddenly gave public recognition to this situation. Even more startling is the fact that in the nation's first city, where blacks and Hispanics comprise about half the population, not a single citywide elective office is held by a black or a Hispanic.

Koch discovered the underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics in the city administration shortly after his own action in the matter of a schools chancellor had sharply aggravated the problem. He had maneuvered the nomination of a white schools chancellor who lacked the formal training and minimum educational qualifications for the post, while pointedly bypassing a black and a Hispanic, both of whom were eminently qualified. (The New York Board of Education finally chose Anthony J. Alvarado, an educator of Puerto Rican origin.) This, in a city where more than 70 percent of the public-school pupils are black or Hispanic. This, after years of argument that qualifications, not race, should determine appointment to high office. Some may read prophecy into the fact that Chicago's former mayor, Jane Byrne, had helped spark a black political uprising when she appointed first one, then two additional members of the public housing commission, all white, even though 90 percent of its tenants are black.

ETHNIC VOTING in this country is as old as its politics. What disfigured the Chicago election



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

campaign was racism. When Republican Bernard Epton appealed to white voters to defeat Washington, "before it's too late," no one was in doubt about the direct racist pitch. Nevertheless, many ordinary people asked, why is it more racist for whites to appeal in behalf of a white candidate than blacks for a black? A not-so-ordinary person, a Republican ideologue and erstwhile speech-writer for that Aristotle of American political life, Spiro Agnew, and syndicated *New York Times* columnist, William Safire, took up that same cudgel. Safire wrote: "If it is laudatory for black voters to vote as a bloc for the black candidate, then logic dictates that it should bother nobody that white voters are likely to vote as a bloc for the white candidate .... Voting on the basis of race is racist."

A cogent reply to this reasoning came in a letter to the *Times* from Harvard political scientist Martin Kilson. He showed how ethnic voting has historically been a means by which ethnic groups achieve a full measure of citizenship and participation in the political process. Kilson recalls the almost total exclusion of Boston Irish from social and political status, and a time when Boston had only a single Irish cop! It was "the political empowerment of Irish–Americans that dictated Irish ethnic-bloc voting for that city's first Irish mayor," Kilson points out. On the other hand, he concludes, "ethnic-bloc voting for the purpose of excluding groups from parity of political and social status is what racism is all about." Alas, there was a lot of that in Chicago. There were even some who had anti-Semitic prejudices, but their dislike of blacks was greater, so they voted for Bernard Epton. Nevertheless, there was an electoral majority that transcended racism and made the Chicago election a significant and promising harbinger of better things to come on the nation's political stage. How did it happen?

Traveling with Harold Washington in the final week of his campaign around the city and around the clock provided part of the answer. First and foremost was the peaceful uprising of blacks, which left the vaunted Chicago machine in ruins and many of its ward heelers gasping for breath. The word "movement" for people conducting political tasks acquired vivid meaning on Washington's campaign trail. At the Cabrini-Green housing project (where Jane Byrne had lived, symbolically, for a week) the whole neighborhood churned with motion. A truck was blaring the recording of a well-known voice, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" oration. People came running from all directions. Not only Washington, but Muhammad Ali too was due shortly. When the two arrived the street began to jump, a good part consisting of mothers and brothers and sisters bringing little children to be kissed by the political and boxing champions. Huge crowds formed and walked with Washington and Ali while traffic had to be detoured elsewhere.

Early that morning Washington had held a press conference at a small plant far out on West Lake Street. It had been scheduled for closing and Washington had negotiated an agreement for the workers to continue operations for 60 more days while discussing conditions that might persuade the company to stay open. Overlooking the plant and the Washington campaign truck, elevated trains rumbled by. Without exception they slowed down as they approached and the motormen (blacks) would lean out of the window, wave and shout greetings.

That afternoon Washington spoke at a student rally on the campus of Northeastern Illinois University to a crowd of black and white students, with more of the former though the latter are a majority in the school. His straightforward liberal-Democratic message was loudly cheered. He described his campaign as "a movement to deal with Mr. Reagan in 1984," and he lambasted his Republican opponent as a statewide practitioner of the Reagan philosophy of cutting government aid for higher education. He assailed "the irrational divisions" in the city and described his campaign as speaking to *all* the neighborhoods of Chicago. He singled out two issues—crime and jobs—advancing a detailed program for better police operations and improving the police department. In the matter of jobs Washington had a two-pronged message—to help improve and develop *all* the neighborhoods; and to end the fiefdom system whereby the ward heelers exact forced political service as payment for more than 40,000 appointive jobs. For the 'nth time he evoked the need for peaceful coexistence in a multiethnic city.

Later, at a regular meeting of more than 1,000 Teachers Union representatives (with a good mix of black and white), union president Robert Healey introduced Washington as a state and national legislator who had gone down the line for labor and its unions. Washington's speech strongly upheld collective bargaining, with stress on defending that right for public employees. The candidate recalled organized labor's traditional support for the public education system, noting in passing that he would be Chicago's first mayor in 60 or 70 years who had attended the city's public schools. All this was balanced by appearances at the elite City Club and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, where Washington assured the city's business and professional groups that he sought to improve the climate for business. Old-hat politicking? Yes. But it was politics that tends to "advance democracy with a small d and not just the capital D," as Washington put it several times that day.

It was late in the evening when Washington ended the day at Mundelein College with a slashing attack against the racism that Epton's media expert John Deardourff had brought to Chicago—a special gift of the Republican National Committee to the local campaign.

THERE WAS MOVEMENT APLENTY but there was also no blinking the fears and prejudice and polarization that had been aroused in the city. This was well understood by many of the militant blacks, veterans of the civil rights movement going back more than two decades. Still, simple arithmetic showed that not only would they have to win most of the Hispanic votes but also a fair percentage of white support. Professor Donn Bailey, director of the Center for Inner City Studies of Northeastern Illinois University, which is almost all black, put it bluntly. He was driving me from the Center—in the inner city—to the lovely Northeastern campus in the white Northwest section of the city and he said: "There's a deep fear among the white people. I can understand it. They think we're going to treat them the way they've treated us." When I laughed, he added that there's no basis for the fear. First of all, white votes were needed for a Washington victory. He foresaw a less than idyllic future—"but we'll have to get along together."

The fears, especially among working-class whites—Polish, Czech, Slovak, Lithuanian, Irish, German, Italian, and many others—were more complex and direct in origin. They feared for their neighborhoods, for the little homes they had lived in so long; they had been frightened by threats of public-housing high-rises changing the character of their neighborhoods. The fears caused working people, who traditionally felt that their hands would wither if they pulled down a Republican lever, to follow Democratic ward leaders in Chicago's Northwest and Southwest sides who were openly or covertly campaigning for Epton. Class divisions were poor indicators of voting patterns in this election.

Washington took both a common-sense and a firmly principled position in the face of these fears. He decried block-busting rumormongers. He said, of course builders and architects would consider the character of a neighborhood in designing public housing, so necessary for so many without adequate homes. But he reasserted his support for the principle of scatter-site housing, which has been upheld by the courts as well as by considerations of fairness.

THE IDEA OF A COALITION that included the traditional liberal, labor, Hispanic, and black voters found explicit support among militant blacks, liberal whites, and half the Chicago labor movement; it had the strong backing of the national AFL-CIO. Yet the harsh reality of both the primary and final election was that a victory for Washington would depend overwhelmingly on the black turnout. After all, blacks are more than 40 percent of Chicago's population, making them by far the largest of the many ethnic groups. Veteran liberal and left political activists have many dispiriting memories of indifference among potential black voters. This has been especially so for the poorest, most insulted and injured who often didn't bother to register. Who hasn't heard the refrain, "Why should I vote? What difference will it make?" Too often there was good ground for such sentiments. But registration of tens of thousands of new black voters was the rock on which the Washington victory was founded.

Politicos around the country rubbed their eyes in amazement after last year's November elections when the Republican governor of Illinois, James Thompson, was nearly unseated by Adlai Stevenson. The latter had run a lackluster campaign. He had not drawn on the deep resentment of both blacks and working-class whites against Reagan and Reaganism. Still, it was in large part the black vote that had made it a close race.

Political leaders might have discovered a new factor in politics if they glanced at Chicago's papers in October 1982. Some 102,000 new voters had been signed up before precinct registration day in October. And on the last registration day before the November 2 election, 135,000 more signed up. According to the Chicago *Sun-Times* 70 percent were estimated to be blacks; the greatest activity had been in the 17 predominantly black wards. National political leaders would have done well to follow the unprecedented activities of groups such as POWER (a coalition of various groups, mainly black), Jesse Jackson's PUSH, the Chicago Black United Communities, the Woodlawn Organization, the Urban League, the Afro-American Patrol League, and black churches. The *Chicago Tribune* editorialized about "the astonishing success of a voter registration drive among black and poor Chicagoans." The coalition known as POWER



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(People Organized for Welfare and Employment Rights), co-chaired by Slim Coleman and Nancy Jefferson, won agreement of the Board of Elections to register voters at public-aid and unemployment offices. Many hundreds of volunteers and contributions from a lot of poor people, as well as from others, helped achieve the record registration—later translated into a record turnout at the polls. New registration campaigns after the primary victory registered many tens of thousands of additional voters.

There were some Democratic leaders who paid little attention to the seething resentment and deep-seated grievances among blacks (and Hispanics) at the bottom of all this. A huge black vote had brought Jane Byrne to City Hall in the first place. Her neglect of decaying black neighborhoods caused disillusionment among blacks. When her appointments made it apparent that black participation in government would be reduced, not advanced, the resentment became overwhelming. Talk with any black in the city and you hear the same story—"Come to my neighborhood and you'll see why we're voting for Washington."

DUE CREDIT, too, must be given to those often scorned white Lakefront liberals. (An irony of the campaign was that one Hyde Park liberal, a black, was facing another Hyde Park liberal—anyway, ex-liberal—a Jew, in this city whose political machine had been dominated by Irish and Slavic politicians for half a century.)

David Canter, chairman of the Hyde Park–Kenwood Independent Voters of Illinois and the state IVI (affiliated with Americans for Democratic Action) had done some arithmetic for Harold Washington in the fall of 1982. Canter had told the press on the eve of last year's November election that a draft was under way to persuade Harold Washington to run for mayor. By that time Washington needed little persuasion—he had witnessed a black political explosion in his native city. Just five days before the election, Canter was sitting with a pocket calculator and he asked me if I wanted to know how the voting would go. He said the total vote would be about 1,275,000 (larger than most predictions). The actual votes cast in all were 1,291,858. "And Washington will win with 664,000 votes," Canter said. Washington got 668,176 votes. It wasn't clairvoyance that explains such uncanny prevision (Canter had also guessed the primary outcome); it was a combination of knowing the arithmetic of the city population and knowing the sentiments, activities, and organizations in all 50 wards of the city. David Canter's own predilection for coalition politics goes back to precinct work for Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1944.

FOR VICTORY in the final election, there had to be a decided change in the Hispanic vote; only 19 percent had gone for Washington in the primary. I saw how that change was being fashioned at the East Van Buren Street Washington headquarters, which handled the precinct work under the capable direction of Dorsey Day, loaned to the campaign by the international headquarters of the United Auto Workers. That union had recognized very early how important the Chicago voting would be for national politics. Day had worked in Chicago auto plants for many years before going on to Detroit to head up the union's job-development work. When I asked him about the relatively low Hispanic vote for Washington in the primary (mainly Mexican but with a growing number of Puerto Ricans in Chicago), Day described the traditional perfidy of discrimination that causes different minorities to scramble for a share of the pie—while that pie is being reduced by Reaganism. Not only were Hispanics pitted against blacks, but Mexicans were divided from Puerto Ricans.

While I was in the headquarters, national representatives of the Democratic party's Hispanic department were examining the latest canvassing results. The campaign was paying off. The strong effort to unite blacks and Hispanics, to provide just shares and fair participation for both (and for all) groups was coming through; the figures were improving. In the end 79 percent of the Hispanic vote went for Washington, up from 19 percent. Together with the 16 percent of white votes that went for Washington you have the April 12 victory. (Of white ethnics the highest percentage voting for Washington were Chicago's Jews—33 percent.)

Nothing detracts from the single major factor in the election. Chicago's blacks had taken the electoral path to empowerment. Talking with Al Raby, who had marched and organized with Martin Luther King 20 years ago and now was the manager of the Washington campaign, it became clear that *this* was the new stage of the civil rights struggle. Would the Democratic party be weakened by the demolition of the Chicago machine? Raby was emphatic that it would be strengthened—but only if an old mistake was not repeated: taking the black vote for granted.

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland had sent a letter to 150,000 Chicago union members recalling Washington's political record and urging them to vote for him, and he had spoken for the candidate. It was all reminiscent of Solidarity Day, Septem-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ber 19, 1981, when some 300,000 marchers and demonstrators had taken over the streets of downtown Washington. It reflected a new spirit in the AFL-CIO, of strong alliance with the organized black civil rights movement, with the women's movement, too, and with all who were ready to make election day a new solidarity day—all in preparation for 1984.

Some of Chicago's politicians who had broken ranks in April have been chastened by the electoral outcome. Though to a large extent the Chicago mayoralty campaign was conducted "as though" there were the traditional New Deal coalition, it showed that the idea was a vibrant force in politics. What's more, the voter registration efforts, the unprecedented participation of blacks and Hispanics, have the makings of a defeat for Reaganism next year. Little support could be found in Chicago for third-party exercises. The Democratic party was clearly seen as the vehicle for political advancement.

The polarization of black and white was far from total. More important, the rebuilding of an alliance between white working-class ethnics and blacks has a sound basis in the common and widespread rejection of Reaganomics. □

John C. Cort

# The Bishops Stay the Course

The Catholic bishops have a nice sense of timing. Last November, just before the election, they released the second draft of a pastoral letter that called for a "halt" to the "testing, production and deployment of new strategic weapons" (*Dissent*, Spring 1983). Eight of nine states that had a chance to vote on a nuclear freeze followed their advice and voted for a halt.

On May 3, the bishops, under pressure from the Reagan administration and from other principalities and powers both in and outside the church, resisted all efforts to replace the word "halt" with the weaker word "curb" and voted 238 to 9 for the final draft and condemnation of the arms race as "a danger, an act of aggression against the poor, and a folly that does not provide the security it promises."

The next day the U.S. House of Representatives followed their advice and voted 278 to 149 for the freeze (halt). Reagan took refuge in the amiable lie —"I think their purpose is the same as ours," he said of the bishops' letter.

A State Department spokesman, Alan Romberg, making what was billed as the Administration's formal response to the bishops, took refuge in the formal lie: "A call for a halt on production and development at current high and unstable levels, as a priority, would have the practical effect of diminishing the prospects for achieving the deep reductions" sought by the Administration. He continued with a Reagan echo, "While we share the bishops' goals of reducing the risks of war and of achieving the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, we believe the most promising step in that direction is to negotiate for deep reductions as a first priority."

In other words, the best prospect for reducing the gigantic stockpile of nuclear weapons is to go on producing nuclear weapons while we argue with the Soviets about who should reduce what and when. Not likely.

It was on this question of "first priority"—freeze or reduction—that Reagan lost so decisively, almost 2 to 1, in the House vote. He took some consolation from the Levitas amendment (passed 225 to 191), which did not alter the insistence of the House that freeze must come first—but merely added that if no reductions are forthcoming within "a reasonable, specified period of time" (determined by the negotiators), the U.S. can withdraw from the freeze.

The sense of the American bishops' letter is that they would favor a vote against this amendment, on the ground that the U.S. already has more than enough nuclear weapons for what they conceded, with intellectual humility, are the morally ambiguous purposes of deterrence.

Who won what in the House was nevertheless made plain by the record of who voted against the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

final resolution (the Reagan-policy backers) and by Reagan's public announcement the next day that it "is not an answer to arms control that I can responsibly support."

THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT was significant not only in the context of American politics and policy but also as a victory for the slowly emerging movement for a more democratic, decentralized way of doing things in the Catholic church.

How and why the word "halt" got changed to "curb" and then back again to "halt" is an interesting story; it highlights the obstacle course that democratization of the church has had to face. The third and final draft, more than twice as long as the first, contains many changes and additions to both the first and second drafts, but none was so portentous as the near-miss of a switch from "halt" to "curb."

The second draft had shaken not only the Reagan administration but also some of the Catholic bishops of Western Europe. Its emphatic insistence on "no first use" had upset those who felt that a nuclear response might be necessary to repel an overwhelming attack by conventional forces from the East. The Vatican called a meeting in Rome of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, chairman of the drafting committee, Archbishop John Roach, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, and a representative group of European bishops. The presiding prelate was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Munich, who heads the important Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He opened by challenging the authority of the U.S. bishops' conference. "A bishops' conference does not have a mandate to teach," he said. "This belongs only to individual bishops or to the college of bishops, together with the pope."

Why an individual bishop has a mandate to teach but not a conference of bishops is the kind of mystification that could only come out of Rome. A summary of the meeting, prepared by a Vatican official, urged the U.S. bishops to "avoid questions of a technical, political, or any other nature that ultimately escape the competence of the ecclesiastical magisterium."

Faced with this and internal opposition from its one hawkish member, Bishop John O'Connor of the U.S. Military Ordinariate, the other four members of the committee panicked slightly and voted to change the word "halt" to "curb" in the key passage relating to their call for a nuclear freeze. And so the call for a freeze became merely a call for a thaw, and about half the wallop went out of the entire 155-page letter. The Reagan forces were delighted and everyone began asking, "What happened?"

To make comparisons with St. Peter's remorse after denying his friendship with Christ would be an exaggeration in dubious taste, but some kind of remorse must have seized the majority of the committee. A few days before they were to submit the third draft to the full meeting of bishops in Chicago they voted to switch back to "halt."

Meanwhile, on April 25, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, representing Reform rabbis of 760 synagogues in the U.S. and Canada, called for a freeze, noting that they had been inspired by the bishops.

Then, on April 28, the bishops of West Germany, though conceding that "nuclear deterrence is not a reliable instrument for preventing war in the long run," nevertheless pointedly declined to support a stand for "no first use" and instead backed the Reagan policy of "flexible response," which holds that nuclear weapons might be needed to stop a conventional attack.

ON MAY 2 the American bishops met, and with almost no opposition they voted to back the committee on its return to an inflexible "halt." Observers noted, however, that the real turning point of the meeting was the vote for a significant hardening of other language that had been softened by the committee in response to Administration and Vatican pressures.

This was on an amendment submitted by Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco that replaced committee language calling the initiation of nuclear war abhorrent and "an unjustifiable moral risk" with this unequivocal condemnation: "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified."

Bishop O'Connor and Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans, another hawkish prelate, meanwhile made repeated efforts to soften or reverse the antinuclear language of the letter. At least 13 amendments proposed by one or both were either defeated with hardly a supporting voice or withdrawn in the face of overwhelming opposition. Afterward Archbishop Hannan remarked somewhat plaintively, "I didn't expect to be so alone."

Other changes and additions were mostly by way of clarification. Support for the "just war theory" was strengthened, but without repudiating the second draft's concession that the pacifist stance was a legitimate Christian option and conscientious objection a position that should be respected by the government.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Any comfort that Ronald Reagan may have derived from the first edition of the committee's third draft was clearly destroyed by the final action of the bishops in Chicago. The bishops, despite buffeting from contrary winds, had stayed the course.

A few days later, the executive council of the National Council of Churches, representing the major Protestant and Orthodox faiths, voted to endorse the bishops' statement. The religious community of America, it seems, was overwhelmingly in agreement. □

Jennifer G. Schirmer

# Legalized Repression in Chile

After recently spending a month in Chile—meeting with teachers, human rights workers and lawyers—it is clear to me that the contradictory maze of constitutional laws, penal codes, executive decrees, and ministerial directives provides the Pinochet regime with a constitutional facade it uses to legitimate the sophisticated, brutal forms of violence by which its security forces make innocent people their victims in the name of "peace and order."

Chile's new constitution, enacted September 11, 1980, grants an impressive array of powers to the president. And Article 24—which President Pinochet has attached to the constitution and calls a "transitional statute [ensuring] gradual evolution toward democracy"—enables him to maintain a state of emergency, to suspend civil rights, and to detain persons accused of "disturbing the peace" for up to 20 days, either under house arrest or in establishments other than prisons.

*Habeas corpus*, although constitutionally recognized in Chile as inalienable, with guarantees of "personal liberty and individual security," is suspended during the continuous states of emergency. The constitution also grants the Pinochet regime the right to exile persons from their domicile to various Chilean cities for a maximum of three months, to deny permission to hold meetings or to print new publications. A 3:00 to 5:00 A.M. curfew is constantly in force, and there are two sets of regulations covering simultaneously states of "emergency," renewed every 90 days, and "the threat of disruption of internal peace," renewed every six months. Union leaders are prohibited by law from broad-base organizing, holding meetings, negotiating collectively, petitioning, or coordinating strikes.

This constitutional basis for repressive actions by executive order virtually annuls human rights for Chileans and legalizes a climate of repression. "Although completely independent legally, the courts may not take [independent] action. Their hands are tied, along with those of the press," a law professor told me.

### Economic Decline and Political Repression

CHILE'S GNP fell by 14 percent in 1982—the steepest drop in Latin America (in war-torn El Salvador, GNP dropped by 4 percent), and there were 810 bankruptcies in Chile that year, the most since 1962. Chile's foreign debt now stands at $17 billion—one of the highest per-capita national debts in the world. Unemployment exceeds 30 percent.[1] Wages continue to fall, and there is a serious food shortage. With the "economic miracle" now an economic disaster, there remains only repression—and the Pinochet regime survives only through that: legally sanctioned repression.

Although a 1981 U.S. State Department report pointed to a decrease in the number of disappeared persons as evidence of Chile's "improved" condition of human rights, it failed to describe the new tactics used by the army, police, and CNI (the

[1] This does not include people working on the minimum-employment project (PEM), who earn between 2,000 and 5,000 pesos ($27 and $55) a month mending roads and repainting government buildings. Over 40 percent of the work force is working at or below the minimum wage of 6,000 pesos ($83) a month.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political, secret "security" police—formerly DINA) to eliminate opponents and maintain control.

### Police Tactics and Mass Arrests

BETWEEN MIDNIGHT of June 25 and dawn of June 26, 1982, in Santiago, 1,631 people were arrested and 196 detained—"in order to maintain civil peace" (*El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, June 27). Such mass detentions are part of the new planned, institutionalized repression used in the last few years by the security forces. In this particular raid, 800 police officials of five city districts participated, using 150 patrol cars—"apprehending suspects with the object of preventing crime and of bringing them before the courts in order to contribute to civil peace." The police frequently carry out these raids in the *poblaciones*—the shantytowns on Santiago's outskirts—where unemployment can be as high as 70 percent. Two such large-scale actions were carried out in December 1982 at La Cisterna and Nuevo Amanecer, and "1,500 male residents were yanked out of their beds and held for 12 hours on a tract of wasteland fixed up as a concentration camp." Officially, the police claimed they were looking for "delinquents and weapons" (*Manchester Guardian*, March 13, 1983).

"About 1,000 suspects are arrested each month in Chile now, with people being picked up from their homes, off the streets, and at work. This causes tremendous fear in the population," a human rights worker told me. According to police statistics (and we must assume here some omissions and deletions), over 1 million people (1,112,667) were arrested in 1977 alone (twice as many as in 1970). In May 1982 alone, over 3,241 persons were arrested for participation in May Day activities. In the state's official language, this was done "to maintain public order and prevent crime" (Chilean Human Rights Report, May 1982).

"We have to commemorate May Day behind four walls [can't meet outdoors] because they are afraid of us, because the truth that our voices proclaim reveals the obscurantism of the present," said Eduardo Rios, president of the UDT (Democratic Union of Workers) at a 1982 clandestine meeting of union leaders, workers, and human rights activists. About 100 people were arrested as they were leaving that meeting.

### Torture

AT THE HEART of this legalized environment of fear is the systematic use of torture—a massive attack on the human body's physical and mental balance—by the government's various security forces. And surely, the total silence about this outrage in the U.S. State Department's 1981 report on Chile's "improvement in human rights" is a flagrant omission.

According to the Solidarity Vicariate of the Roman Catholic Church and the Chilean Human Rights Commission, in 1982 the cases of torture *reported* by victims had risen to 95, compared to 65 in 1981.[2] Increasingly, the police are using torture as a standard interrogation technique. (Police cars, for example, are equipped with 4,000-watt electric batons, and, during "interrogations," state-paid doctors are on hand making sure that torture is skillfully meted out without leaving visible traces.) People who are arrested are usually blindfolded and taken to "secret" detention centers, which now are legally accepted by the courts.

In the words of the Association of Lawyers for Human Rights in Chile, recorded in their *Bulletin* of November 1980 —

> It is evident that torture is . . . not a fortuitous activity but regularly practiced by persons in the police, the army, and the secret services of the government. [It is] a technique that now is part of the regular detention methods. [The victim] is beaten and mistreated in an objective, regulated, "technical" manner. It is a system that *requires* torturers in the name of "National Security."

According to a Chilean supreme court ruling of August 1982, the state's authorities may not be questioned about the clandestine detention centers or the whereabouts of persons who have disappeared. This ruling amounts to giving the state legalized license, making torture and kidnapping the legal *norm*.

Human rights workers—the lawyers who defend tortured prisoners and the doctors who attend the victims of torture—are living under constant threat and surveillance. In the past year alone, 40 of them were persecuted. "We have been told by the government that we have no right to exist, despite this lovely framed charter of human rights there, above my head," a top official at the Human Rights Commission said to me, waving his hand toward that frame on the wall behind his rickety desk in the large, unheated room overlooking the Alameda, Santiago's main thoroughfare. "They told us this charter was a Communist facade and that our

[2] Human rights activists say that the real figures reach well into the hundreds. Torture has become such a grave problem that the National Committee Against Torture was recently formed by human rights activists in Chile (*Hoy*, January 12-18,1983).



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

former director, Jaime Castillo—a right-wing theoretician of the Christian Democratic party—was a co-author of Marxism!" Castillo was exiled twice, the second time in August 1981 for defending workers' right to petition the government in cases of injustice; he now lives in exile in Venezuela. Two other human rights representatives were arrested in September 1981; one of them was severely tortured, and both now also are exiles.

### *Enfrentamientos*: The "Shootouts"

BESIDES THE TACTIC of mass arrests, detention, and torture, another legal form of repression is used by the security forces: the *enfrentamiento*, or "shootout," in which the victim is surrounded by soldiers, and murdered. The use of this tactic "has increased to such an extent that it makes one believe it has been substituted for the tactic of 'disappearances' " (Chilean Human Rights Report, 1982).

The ratio of victims to soldiers in these actions is often 1 to 50, or 1 to 100, or even 2 to 400. "And these things don't happen by accident," the human rights official who keeps track of police tactics told me. "They are well-planned." In two cases I heard of, helicopters were used to bomb the homes of "terrorists." In some cases, there are many witnesses. For instance, 20 workers at a construction site watched as one worker was surrounded by soldiers and gunned down. "They all turned away and ran off, because they didn't want to see anything." Witnesses of other "shootouts," as that of Lisandro Sandoval T. on August 20, 1981, have described what they saw as a public execution—not a shootout at all. "Such actions are always reported in the press and by the police as a shootout with an armed terrorist," I was told. "But if you know anything about Chile, you know that we don't carry guns on the streets here!"

Between January 19, 1981 and February 25, 1982, 27 persons were killed in such planned "shootouts." Many of the victims had relatives who were previously detained, registered and tortured, and some of the victims themselves had been arrested before, and tortured. According to the Special Report to the United Nations on Chile of November 6, 1981, "These victims were persons not involved in violent activities but often simply political opponents, and some of them had refused to become informers for the security organizations." A priest who works in the *poblaciones* (shantytowns) told me of almost nightly incidents of machine-gun fire and helicopters with searchlights circling above the roofs. "They are doing exactly what they say they are protecting us from," he said, "what they say the Communists do—police raids by night, detention without trial, cruel torture, and threats to one's family."

### Kidnappings by *Desconocidos*

ANOTHER FORM of legalized state repression is the kidnapping by *desconocidos* ("unknown"), which often ends with murder. This terrifying action frequently occurs after a member of the military or a CNI agent has been killed. It's supposedly an act of reprisal, and launched against anyone who's around and can be labeled "subversive." "Many innocent people are told they're guilty of such killings and sentenced to death," a human rights worker told me. He showed me a long list of cases. I can mention merely a few here.

- On October 20, 1981, Hugo Riveras, an art student at Bellas Artes, was arrested, without reason, at his home by unidentified CNI agents or *desconocidos* after the death of one of their colleagues. (Riveras had previously been arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and released without evidence of "terrorism.") His corpse later was found; he had been shot, after suffering cruel torture.

- The journalist Cecilia Alzamora, along with a journalism student (whose name I, alas, do not know), was kidnapped from a taxi on Santiago's busiest thoroughfare, the Alameda, on July 23, 1980, at midday (as seven others were, too, later that August). The student was tortured to death; Cecilia survived. She recalls "with total certainty" that her kidnappers were not merely members of COVEMA (troops of the Comando Vengadores de Mártires) but none other than the Chief of Homicide (BH) and the Chief of Investigations of Assault (BIA). This journalist brought her case to court. So far, the special prosecutor—claiming for the accused officials the protection of the law that is to preserve state security—has blocked the presentation of evidence, and so has prevented Alzamora's case from coming to trial. Thus the annulment of appeals for human rights is legitimized by the state.

- On February 26, 1982, Tucapel Jimenez, president of Chile's National Association of Public Employees (ANEF), who called for the unity of workers in preparation for a strike, was brutally knifed by *desconocidos*. "The people who were responsible for this crime have never been found," said now-exiled Manuel Bustos, then president of the Coordinadora Nacional Sindical (one of several now illegal coordinating groups of labor leaders in Chile), at the clandestine May Day meeting a few months later. "How can this be justified in a country where the government has so much con-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trol, police and security forces are so efficient in repressing opponents, and where the government says there is so much 'peace and tranquillity'?" Ironically, a few days after Jimenez's murder the state of emergency again was renewed for another 90 days—in the words of the state, "to assure the tranquillity that Chileans have enjoyed since 1973." But—"Who has the right to live in peace in Chile, if Tucapel Jimenez doesn't?" asked an editorial in the Christian journal *Mensaje* (April 1982, no. 307).

• Between January 1981 and February 1982, in Santiago, 35 cases of kidnapping by *desconocidos* were reported. These extralegal actions are publicly condemned—to give an appearance of legitimacy and constitutionality to Pinochet's regime.

Whether these new forms of violence are perpetrated by government-sponsored death squads or are happening because the state now is losing control over its own security forces is not clear to human rights workers. In any case, the increasing frequency of such kidnappings and murders threatens the safety of human rights workers, too. As one of them said to me:

> This new form of violence may be emanating from middle-class elements, who see themselves losing control economically and are panicked by the fear of the center-left taking over again. It also surely stems from certain sectors in the police and the army who aren't getting their "portion of the pie." In the future, there might emerge in Chile such organizations as Mano Blanca in Guatemala and Orden in El Salvador. It is *this* kind of *officially* unofficial violence that we who work in human rights must watch out for. We know who arrested and persecuted our representatives in December 1981, but we just can't know where or when *desconocidos* will come for us, or for others. That is why I carry this thick packet of international [protection] cards, like this one from the Canadian consul. One never knows when one may need these—when there is always the threat of torture and death . . . .

### PIDEE—Aiding the Victims' Children

THE DAMAGE of this systematic, legalized repression not only affects those who are detained and tortured; it takes its toll on their families, too. And not only the victims' children—the children of human rights workers, too, experience threats by the CNI. The psychological toll this violence takes on the children of Chile, and thus on the country's future, is incalculable. As one young woman of the student movement said, who had been tortured, "If you were to ask me whether I would want to have a child—a child of fear—I would say, positively, no!" (From *Ormiga*, a clandestine paper written and published by women in the *poblaciones*, Santiago's shantytowns.)

PIDEE, the organization called the Protection of Children Damaged by the States of Emergency,[3] was founded in May 1979. PIDEE provides psychological help (with four child psychologists on hand) and economic aid for the children of the disappeared, the tortured, the exiled, and the executed. PIDEE has plenty of work to do. It does as much as can be managed, with its small, dedicated staff and its meager means—and its many needy, mourning, disturbed, and damaged young clients in need of help.

> Chile Advances Through Peace and Order!
>
> *—Rotating sign in three languages at Santiago Airport.*

### What of Human Rights?

WITH 35 U.S.-OWNED mineral companies now exploring in Chile, with rumors that the old American military base on Easter Island may be reopened, and with the development of a Chilean arms industry bracing for export to the rest of Latin America, it is perhaps no surprise that the Reagan administration is anxious *not* to acknowledge the Pinochet regime's abuses of human rights—but eager to end the present embargo of U.S. military and economic aid to Chile.

Surely, a country such as Chile does not deserve a U.S. administration's certification that it has made "progress" in regard to human rights. Rather, it is imperative that the concept be expanded to take into account the repressive *nature* of a regime that is arresting thousands every month and has constitutionally legitimized torture and public executions. Loopholes need to be closed that allow both military dictators and neoconservatives to make a sham of these inalienable rights. For if today's Chile can be presented by the Reagan administration as respecting human rights, then the very words cease to have meaning.

---

[3] PIDEE welcomes all contributions at Avenida Holanda no. 3607, Ñuñoa, Santiago, Chile.

I am indebted to Andrés Domínguez and Gustavo Rayo of the Chilean Human Rights Commission for their gracious help while I was in Chile and their excellent article, "Respuesta al Informe Reagan," *Analisis*, April 1982 (Santiago). Others whose witness was of great help must unfortunately remain nameless. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bernard Rosenberg

# The U.S.A. and the UAW

## Notes from Dallas

May 15–20. Dallas. No, not *Dallas*, a soap opera that holds much of the world's population in its grip. Same scene, no doubt, but a different cast of characters. On this occasion, 5,000 UAW people, half of them delegates, have assembled from every part of North America for their 27th Constitutional Convention. "Who killed American labor?" wasn't exactly the theme, but some of these union representatives, who are not sure if they will ever attend another such gathering (their plants may be closed), looked funereal enough. They know who's killing their movement. The culprit, Ronald Wilson Reagan, never stopped getting his lumps. He or his affluent allies will nevertheless claim that no one laid a glove on him. The House majority leader, Jim Wright of Fort Worth, one of several political guests and a Texas liberal to boot, best explained Le Cowboy's technique:

> Harry Truman said, "The buck stops here." Ronald Reagan says, "Blame it on Jimmy," or "Blame it on Jerry," or "Blame it on Lyndon," or "Blame it on Harry," or Zachary Taylor or Millard Fillmore.

Maybe Dallas was the right place after all—and maybe the ILO should convene in Beirut. Who cares if it is the tornado season? Wet or dry, we could make our way from hotel to convention hall. And that's all some of us did. When Ted Kennedy refused to be present so close to the 20th anniversary of his brother's assassination in this hospitable city, few could fault him. Others, however ravenous for reading matter, were able to sidestep the world's most famous Book Depository. Man, this is gun-totin' country.

The union issued its own warnings: avoid South Dallas and Near East Dallas; don't hail taxis; beware of decoy prostitutes who are really policewomen. Some of us went our advisers one better: we avoided almost all of Dallas, rode on buses, and didn't so much as smile at a waitress.

Apart from the selection of a peculiar site, this country's best union did itself proud. Douglas Fraser's final report, *The State of Our Union*, condensed from two weighty volumes that deserve to be studied with care, is a superb document. This last official pronouncement of a fine president who neither postures nor sways with the wind is proof enough that the sons of Valentine Reuther built well. Walter, the union's leader for 24 years, surrounded himself with only slightly subordinate officers whose intelligence and integrity organized labor will probably never surpass.

Walter Reuther died in a plane crash en route to Black Lake, Michigan, where 13 years ago the UAW established its Family Education Center. Union spokespeople call that Center the fulfillment of one man's dream. How odd! The bitter truth of this century is too often reducible to this: that in dreams begin irresponsibilities. Not so with Walter's dream, which was to educate the worker for leadership. The worker's spouse and children were to be included, for Walter assumed that they too must understand what the labor movement is and how much more it could be. Doug Fraser now has every reason to boast that more than a quarter-million UAW members and their families, along with other trade unionists and visitors, have taken advantage of the facility's training programs. Black Lake was designed to teach certain skills but, more important, to foster a sense of community—and responsibility.

That a union should just now be so heavily committed to education and not only in one sylvan setting but in a diversified and creative program is more than remarkable. It bodes well for the future that in so many other ways seems too disheartening for serious contemplation.

In Dallas, working men and women were admonished to remember a maxim of the Reuther generation: "Essential to maintaining our union's democratic tradition is an informed membership." An informed electorate might not hurt either (and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Owen Bieber, the newly elected UAW president, is unlikely to forget that). They go together, and where their absence takes us is suggested by recent UN figures, which, according to a recent issue of *Daedalus*, showed a shockingly low literacy figure for the United States.

Public education to inform and enlighten such a citizenry doesn't exercise federal administrators. For they are infected with Reaganitis. This disease precludes concern with freedom, a political necessity about whose infringement they now and then prattle. Abolish the Department of Education. Let our children pray their way to knowledge. Apparently, in Washington ignorance, like unemployment, is not a problem but a policy.

How could it be otherwise? No one in an Administration "of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich," as Fraser accurately dubbed it in his farewell address, has the slightest idea of how to preserve freedom by stressing simple, let alone political and cultural, "basics." They will look after their own while the public schools crumble. Why care more about schools than about the physical infrastructure (bridges, roads, whole cities) that is likewise no business of theirs? One shrinking segment of organized labor will do its little bit and agitate for government to do its task.

More to the point of UAW succession and why it's not to worry about: "Since our last convention, 20,000 rank-and-file activists have passed through our leadership institutes." The *Detroit News* did quote an anonymous old-timer who referred to a coming wave of mediocrity; he may be right. And yet *this* witness to the events in Dallas, who grew

## From a MacNeil–Lehrer Interview with Douglas Fraser

*Below are some excerpts from an interview conducted by Robert MacNeil (from New York) and Jim Lehrer (from Washington), on Public Television's* MacNeil-Lehrer Report, *with Douglas Fraser, who spoke from Dallas on May 20, 1983. Copyright © 1983 by the Educational Broadcasting Corporation and GWETA, and printed here with permission.*—Eds.

Robert MacNeil: Won't fresh wage demands by auto workers further weaken the price competitiveness of U.S. cars, given foreign wage rates?

Douglas Fraser: Well, I suppose if you're just looking at wage increases in the abstract you could make that argument. But our productivity in the automobile industry is advancing at a very rapid rate, and as we increase the volume and get the economics of scale, there's going to be a great escalation of productivity. So my guess would be that the increased productivity would offset any new wage increases.

MacNeil: Well, productivity of course raises questions like robots and computers and things, which are replacing a lot of workers. Won't fresh militancy by the auto workers hasten their arrival?

Fraser: Well, you see, you can't—in our union, historically, this is a matter of philosophy. We've never resisted automation and new technology because we realize that if you want a larger slice of the economic pie, the easiest way to do it is bake a larger pie. But what we have to do in the future is provide [conditions so] that the introduction of automation is not done in an uncivilized manner where massive numbers of workers are thrown out in the street. It has to be done in a more humane way. And one of the reasons we do it is because . . . you can have people laid off by attrition—[which does] reduce the work force; I should say, by attrition rather than just putting people out on the street. In addition to that, if you have sufficient expansion of the auto industry, if the auto industry begins to grow once more, then you'll be producing more and more vehicles but with the same number of workers, or slightly more workers. And that's what's happened to us in the course of the last 30 years.

□

MacNeil: You've also talked a lot about the further democratization of American industry, getting more worker representation. Exactly what does that mean, and how far do you think it should go?

Fraser: Well, it takes a variety of forms. But I think the principal one, and this is now taking place in the workplace at Ford and General Motors, in a considerable number of plants, and that is that the workers' intelligence is finally recognized by the company. And . . . they've finally recognized what I've known for over 40 years, that the men and women in the auto plant are intelligent persons with tremendous ingenuity, and they are great innovators, and the companies are beginning now to utilize that intelligence. And I think that in itself democratizes the workplace, when a worker has really a meaningful voice in organizing the fashion in which his work is performed.

□

Jim Lehrer: Mr. Fraser, what lights the fire in the belly of a union activist today compared with what got you started 47 years ago? Is going to a board meeting all that's involved?



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up amid the Motown sounds of Walter Reuther, admiring them as much as he was repelled by those of Jimmy Hoffa, is deeply impressed with the UAW in transition.

The spirit, the organization, the tradition are all so palpably strong that they can stand a touch or two of mediocrity. Not that there was much evidence of it on the floor, where new blood mixed with old blood, and no one was any the worse for it. Retirees retain power in this union. They debate and they vote, and they are treated as respectfully as newcomers.

But neither generational nor racial nor sexual division split delegates who heatedly discussed constitutional matters. These proceedings were, as always, exemplary. A fair—some would claim an inordinate—amount of time was given over to minority views. The dominant attitude remains: rules are there to obey until a majority overturns them.

Hours were devoted to a debate over an amendment perennially favored by a few locals. They support a one-member/one-vote system of elections instead of representative union democracy. Their views were once again aired with vehemence. To no avail. A large majority would not let its "brothers and sisters" forget that other unions—not above fixing elections or using ruffians and, in at least one recent case, committing murder—all enjoy the benefits of one member/one vote. Direct democracy of this kind for the Teamsters, the United Mine Workers, and the Steel Workers spelled no democracy at all. The resolution was soundly defeated. And so it went, with passion and

FRASER: No, no. I think the same old struggles are there in one form or the other. I think what lights the fire in the worker's belly is, for example, going through this excruciating period of unemployment. You know, the frustration and the agony and despair that a family feels or men or women feel who can't provide for their families. And I can see a significant change of attitude in the last two years, but particularly on the part of people who've been laid off over an extended period, who remind me of the Depression of the '30s.

LEHRER: In what way?

FRASER: Resentment, resentment from the fact that they're ready and willing and able and anxious to work and can't find a job to provide for their families. It's really history revisited.

LEHRER: Is it resentment toward the company or resentment toward the union or resentment toward the system?

FRASER: Well, I think in large measure the resentment is coming against the Administration. And I don't—I'm not criticizing. I don't care what Administration would be in power, and those very same people, members of our union who voted for Ronald Reagan in significant numbers in 1980, are now saying to us, "We made a terrible mistake."

□

MacNEIL: What do you see as the future of unionism as the economy changes, as we're told it's going to change radically?

FRASER: Well, I think you're going to have greater difficulty organizing. You're just kidding yourself if you don't accept that fact because, as . . . the industrial sector shrinks, the service sector grows, and the service sector traditionally, historically, is a little more difficult to organize. And so unions have their work cut out for them, and are just going to have to intensify their organizational efforts using the newest techniques available and put a greater amount of resources into their organizational efforts.

LEHRER: What is the major attraction to a modern worker in these new industries to join a union?

FRASER: Well, I think the basic answer is a philosophical one, and that is if you're a worker, I don't care where you work, but the only way you can have a voice in your own future and your own destiny is through representation of your own choosing. Now, the only exception to that rule is if you have a certain talent and a certain professionalism that is in demand, then you can bargain as an individual. But absent that, in a mass industry, and really the only way you can have democracy in a workplace is by representation of your own choosing by a union. Otherwise, you just must accept whatever the boss has to give you.

□

LEHRER: Is the country well governed now?

FRASER: Oh, I don't believe so. I think the economic policies of this Administration are an absolute disaster. You know, they brag about the fact that the inflation rate last year was only 3.9, and I keep saying, as I told the delegates to our convention, any fool can reduce inflation to nothing. When I was a kid, a teenager, the cost of living was going down. Of course, 25 percent of our population was unemployed, and anyone can wring inflation out of the economy. The trick is to try to get the balance that we once had in this country. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reason alternating among delegates who did not need to fear that the chairman's gavel would arbitrarily silence them. The internal structure of a truly democratic union is intact.

SO WHAT IS TO WORRY ABOUT? Only everything else. How posters and placards are worded tells part of the story:

*Jobs, Peace, Human Rights;*
*Plant Closings—a Capital Crime;*
*Payrolls—Not Welfare Rolls;*
*Ronnie's Pals—Millionaires, Military, Multinationals;*
*Stop Job Hazards—Health Is Not for Sale.*

Slogans are also instructive. Take two. One, "*Organize the Unorganized*," is favored by many labor leaders who constantly repeat and seldom implement it. Today, however, the shibboleth has special urgency. Only 18 percent of the work force is organized. As of May 2, U.S. domestic layoffs in the auto industry amounted to 236,702, and in the aerospace and agricultural implement industries to 60,000 layoffs. The outgoing president triumphantly announced success at Caterpillar after a seven-month strike without detailing the terms of that success or mentioning closures and failures elsewhere, notably at International Harvester. That the enormously expanded military budget will create few, if any, jobs comes as a surprise only to the uninformed.

Doug Fraser, on May 15, reported 36 small UAW strikes then in progress. He added that it was as important to protect 15 or 20 workers as it was to negotiate with GM. It certainly is when you're scrambling for members from the service sector, in hospitals and museums and universities, where resistance resembles that of the industrial sector before 1935. And further penetration of the public sector is more difficult than ever. The fate of PATCO made that "perfectly clear," as they used to say. And "at this point in time" as they still say, robotics and electronics, runaways and takeaways are simply ruinous to the old American working class.

A great many of the unemployed will neither be replaced nor reemployed. To speak of the "dispossessed" is no longer a rhetorical flourish. It is too literally true of too many people. Their suffering, poverty, untended illness, humiliation and demoralization are too obvious. It's one's buddies who are in shock and oneself who may be next in the breadline. Therefore the second slogan: "*Organize the Unemployed*," an idea hardly heard since the Great Depression, when it got nowhere even though there were 25 million jobless Americans. Only World War II finally rescued them. That method does not appear to interest the unemployed this time. Not after Vietnam. Not for the sake of El Salvador.

Organize the unemployed? What can that mean? Nothing old-hat. No all-encompassing union; just join with the jobless in alleviating their problems as well as our own. And theirs are worse. Organize the unemployed as well as the employed to "*Fight Back Against Reagan's War on the Workers*"—yet another slogan, this one under the heading of "Citizenship."

Is Doug Fraser whistling in the dark when he asserts that labor owes one debt to President Reagan? How can that be? Well, says Fraser,

> His Administration has demonstrated that the bread box and the ballot box are inseparably linked. More than any President in the past four decades, he has proven for all to see that whatever workers win can be snatched away by administrative fiat or legislative coup . . . .President Reagan has, consequently, done more than any other 20th-century President to mobilize working people and their unions for political action.

We'll see. The signs are there. Blue-collar disenchantment with right-wing Republicanism is all but complete. The clarion call for opposition to ideologues who have failed on every front can be heard equally well from union and nonunion, employed and unemployed types.

Solidarity Day, September 19, 1981 in Washington, now is viewed as a massive indictment of Reagan's first eight and a half months in office. The mid-term elections have added 24 humane congressmen to the House roster, and the Chicago mayoral elections a black mayor—all with effective UAW campaigning as additional proof. But reactionaries may well gasp at the leadership's next plan—a possible large-scale, one-day strike to focus national attention on the tragedy of unemployment.

About the new UAW leadership—Owen Bieber, the president, Ray Majerus, the secretary-treasurer, and Steve Yokich, head of the Ford department—it is too soon to speak with any certainty. These people are seasoned unionists with much experience in collective bargaining. They have been trained in the Reuther tradition; but they did not, and given their age could not, go through the deeply formative experiences of the generation that built the UAW in the 1930s. The founding generation was represented at this convention by an impressive group—all of whom were affected by the Reuther style of unionism and some of whom still regard themselves as democratic socialists.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The new leaders come to office with a strong tradition behind them, but also with a weight of problems and difficulties that is enormous. One can only wish them well.

AH, BUT THERE'S THE COMPLEX and controversial issue of protectionism. In hard times (and these are very hard times, except for an elite that will celebrate the so-called recovery now taking place), industrial workers want job security and hope to attain it through passage of a "domestic content" bill that stands some chance of passage through the Congress. The UAW doubts Reagan would make good on his threat to veto this legislation if it came to his desk, because by then he will be seeking to regain the salvageable part of his blue-collar constituency.

Labor has lobbied day and night, none more vigorously than the UAW, for restriction of imports from Japan. Now the union is willing to settle for a piece of the action. Undeterred by the memory of Smoot, Hawley, and Hoover, workers denounce free trade as a fraud and take truly "fair trade" to their bosom. Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio, "the only U.S. senator not running for president," put it very simply to the convention: "If the Japanese won't buy our baseball bats we won't buy their cars." But their cars are here, capturing an ever-larger part of the domestic market. No one listened to Reuther when he proposed, as long ago as 1947, that the auto industry manufacture small cars. The American consumers would buy only behemoths, argued management, with plenty of chrome and lots of mechanical defects. Came the VW from Germany. No matter. Then came Nader; a Middle Eastern war; OPEC; and disaster in Detroit. Never mind.

Management would not budge till it was too late—then manufacturers and workers joined hands, beseeching the patriotic consumer to "Buy American." The consumer bought Japanese and other small foreign cars. Pretty soon, Nissan, Toyota, and Datsun were here. Import quotas did not stop them from joining hands with General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler redivivus (at the workers' and taxpayers' expense).

Old plants are closing in the sunset states. New, highly automated, jointly owned plants are opening in the sunrise states. Corporate profitability in two countries is assured; so is further unemployment. Thus the excoriations of Japan, which are easy to elicit from Americans. They rang through Convention Hall, its corridors and environs. You would think the "Yellow Peril" was upon us again. There was as much talk as there had been before the present crisis of government-labor-management collaboration, this time to stop the Japanese bastards from taking our bread away from us. On this issue labor is as close to unanimity as it was long ago, and to our everlasting shame, on the Oriental exclusion laws.

GIVEN A GLOBAL ECONOMY and the obsolescence of nation/states, does it make sense to pit country against country, worker against worker? Pre-World War I socialists would have said no. Somebody at the UAW convention said no, and brought down the house with his affirmation of international solidarity. He said it in a speech that went unheralded and all but unreported. This man, introduced by Fraser as his good friend, was no less a personage than the incumbent head of the Japanese auto workers union. Hard bargaining is ahead. It will turn largely on whether the UAW is allowed to organize new factories in which neither partner to the international enterprise is enthusiastic about unions. The Japanese labor leader pledged his assistance to the UAW. He identified the common enemy, rapacious corporations the world over that, unchecked by capitalist and communist, left and right regimes, can do us all in.

Unions answerable to their members and firms beholden to their shareholders have to think in short-range terms, finding more jobs or turning quick profits. The UAW is no exception. At the same time it has kept an eye on the future. No one steeped in the Reuther philosophy, with its democratic and socialist roots, hesitates to use a word like planning even if neoliberals recoil from it with nearly as much horror as neoconservatives. And planning for the 21st century demands an international outlook.

Fortunately, contact with labor outside our borders has always been the UAW's strong suit. Victor Reuther spent much of his life cultivating that contact. Fraternal relations of this kind provide the nucleus for a long-range plan to raise living standards abroad instead of lowering them in the United States and Canada. No union is better situated for encouraging the organization of blacks in South Africa; the UAW is actively involved in that struggle. No union is more alert to the use of sweat labor in many parts of the Third World. None could educate us better on this score, arguing as much from self-interest as from altruism. Workers cannot prosper at home on the backs of other workers who are mercilessly exploited abroad. One caught a glimpse of this vision that could not be entirely obscured by the popularity of protectionism, even in darkest Dallas. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With the ominous year of 1984 just around the calendar, Irving Howe has gathered a wide range of distinguished contributors to examine the historical, political and intellectual problems that gave rise to Orwell's great book. With viewpoints spanning the gamut of serious opinion in the United States, they offer a fresh and provocative analysis of *1984* and the ideas it spawned, and the problems raised by the course of totalitarianism since it first appeared.

Part I—The Book and the Writer

**Irving Howe** 1984: Enigmas of Power
**Mark Crispin Miller** The Fate of *1984*
**Elaine Hoffman Baruch** "The Golden Country": Sex and Love in *1984*
**Bernard Avishai** Orwell and the English Language
**Luther Carpenter** *1984* on Staten Island

Part II—Ideas

**Robert C. Tucker** Does Big Brother Exist?
**Michael Walzer** On "Failed Totalitarianism"
**Leszek Kolakowski** Totalitarianism and the Virtue of the Lie
**Milovan Djilas** The Disintegration of Leninist Totalitarianism
**Johanno Strasser** *1984*: Decade of the Experts?
**James B. Rule** *1984*—The Ingredients of Totalitarianism
**Robert Nisbet** *1984* and the Conservative Imagination

Part III—History

**Richard Lowenthal** Beyond Totalitarianism

IRVING HOWE
EDITOR

A Perennial Library paperback original from
**Harper & Row** **10 East 53d Street • New York, NY 10022**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Walzer

# On Failed Totalitarianism

George Orwell's *1984* was first published in 1949. By then many of its major themes had been anticipated, both in conservative literature and in the internal debates of the democratic left (and in such earlier antiutopian novels as Zamiatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*).

Yet, in another sense, Orwell was a forerunner: the major theoretical works on totalitarianism as a political regime—on its origins, history, and internal character—all appeared in the early and middle 1950s. It is as if *1984* released the flood, and writers of all sorts (many of them, unlike Orwell, refugees from totalitarian states) hurried forward to complete or revise "The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism" of *1984*'s Emmanuel Goldstein. Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared in 1951, Jacob Talmon's *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* in the same year; Czeslaw Milosz's *Captive Mind* came out in 1953; C. J. Friedrich's *Totalitarianism,* an important collection of essays, appeared in 1954 and marked the academic arrival of the new theory; Zbigniew Brzezinski published his *Permanent Purge* in 1956, and Friedrich and Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* came out that same year.

These books are often treated as if they were so many volleys in the developing cold war—efforts to draw the line between the free world and Communist tyranny and to define the Russian enemy as the very embodiment of evil. Perhaps they played that role; certainly their arguments, in vulgarized form, made useful propaganda. But the collective effort to understand what had happened in Germany and Russia was immensely serious, and the level of analysis in the books I have listed was very high. Nor was the distinction between freedom and tyranny their central point. The major theoretical argument of Orwell's book and of all the books that followed is the startling novelty of totalitarian politics.

Totalitarianism is a new kind of regime, different not only from liberal democracy, but also and more importantly from every previous form of tyranny. "By comparison with that existing today, all the tyrannies of the past were half-hearted and inefficient"—thus Orwell's Goldstein. "Modern totalitarian democracy," Talmon wrote a few years later, " . . . is completely different from the absolutism wielded by a divine-right king or by a usurping tyrant." *Completely different,* something new under the sun, the terrible creation of our own contemporaries.

The argument that totalitarianism represents a radical break even within the long history of unfreedom has recently been revived by a group of conservative intellectuals. They are right, it seems to me, to stress the importance of the argument. But the distinction they go on to draw between totalitarian and "authoritarian" regimes plays a part in their work that the theorists of the '50s never intended: it functions very much like and often simply replaces the cold war distinction between communism and the free world. Indeed, it is one of the purposes of conservative intellectuals to revive the spirit of the cold war.

The shift in terminology suggests a certain loss of confidence in the idea of a *free* world—a loss that helps to explain, perhaps, the increasing stridency with which we are called upon to defend not only free but also tyrannical re-

This essay is part of *1984 Revisited*, edited by Irving Howe. Copyright © 1983 by F.S.I.S.I. To be published in September by Harper & Row.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gimes, so long as they are not totalitarian. Still, the argument for novelty is interesting and deep, and I mean to consider it here at some length. I shall adopt the conservatives' terms, using "authoritarian" to refer to all the forms of unfreedom—tyrannies, oligarchies, military dictatorships, colonial regimes, and so on—save for those that resemble nazism and Stalinism.

## II

Three things above all mark the novelty of totalitarian regimes as they are described in the theories of the 1950s.

• The first is the political mobilization of the masses. Totalitarianism, we are told, is incompatible with passivity; it draws its special power from a disciplined, active, engaged population; it requires people who *march*. In a sense, then, totalitarianism is the heir of all those democratic and socialist movements that first brought the people into the political arena. But it is a strange heir who disowns his heritage, and it might more easily be said that totalitarianism represents the demobilization of democratic parties, movements, and unions—the transformation of political action into ritual performance and of arguments into slogans. What is necessary is that the people be present and accounted for, available for demonstrations and mass meetings.

Discipline, action, and engagement are required only from the members of the new elite, the totalitarian party. Orwell saw this clearly, more clearly, I think, than theorists transfixed by the idea of totality. The collectivism of the Ingsoc regime of *1984* derives indeed from English socialism, but the institutional structures that the socialists built have been dismantled, and the "proles" they organized have been returned to a state of apolitical quiescence. Popular mobilization consists only in this: that insofar as the people have any public life at all, it is planned and run by party officials.

• The second mark of totalitarianism is its extraordinary sense of purpose. Authoritarian rulers aim only to stay in power, but the totalitarian party aims at the creation of a new humanity and a perfect regime. Talmon called this commitment "political messianism" because it suggested the possibility of reaching the end of days through sheer political willfulness. If the people are to march, they must march somewhere, and where else but to the promised land, the messianic kingdom? No other goal could possibly sustain the spirit of the marchers. Here again, totalitarianism appears as the heir of the left, building upon revolutionary aspiration as church officials once built upon eschatological hope.

But others can build here too. *Novus ordo seclorum,* a new cycle of the ages: these words are engraved on the Great Seal of the United States and suggest that a nontotalitarian and a secular politics can also be founded upon revolutionary aspiration. The theorists of the '50s must have thought that the special mark of totalitarianism was to take revolutionary aspiration seriously and to use state power to enforce its ends. But we might follow Orwell and describe this use of power as an example of "doublethink," simultaneously genuine and deeply cynical. It only intermittently determines the policies of the totalitarian party; most often it serves only hortatory and legitimizing purposes—like other and older ideologies. Power is actually used with other ends in mind.

• The third mark is the decisive one. Totalitarianism involves a systematic effort to control every aspect of social and intellectual life. Thus the Nazi *Gleichschaltung,* the top-down coordination of economy, politics, education, religion, culture, and family. Radical control, control in detail: perhaps earlier rulers dreamed of such a thing, but it became technically feasible—this is one of the central themes of *1984*—only in the 20th century.

Orwell suggests that control has two forms, negative and positive. The proles are merely pacified, like a colonial population; it is enough if they neither think nor act in an oppositionist way. But party members are conceived to have made a profound commitment to political life (again, the model derives from the revolutionary movement) and to have accepted the discipline of the collective. So their lives are carefully shaped and directed; their every movement is watched; they are allowed no private



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thoughts or feelings, no respite from political enthusiasm. They are expected to live, writes Orwell's Goldstein, "in a continuous frenzy of hatred of foreign enemies and internal traitors, triumph over victories, and self-abasement before the power and wisdom of the Party."

One might think that this intense and pervasive discipline is somehow functional to the stated purposes of the party, much as worker solidarity is functional to the purposes of trade unionism. But the only purpose of party discipline, Orwell argues, is greater discipline. Totalitarianism is the exercise of power for its own sake. Hannah Arendt makes a similar point when she writes that the totalitarian regime finds its perfect form not in the messianic kingdom but in the death camp. We never control a man so totally as when we kill him. But Orwell had already taken the argument one step further: Winston Smith is alive at the end of *1984* and ready at last to acknowledge that he loves the leader of the Party. We never control a man so totally as when we seize his soul.

Totalitarianism can be described as the absolute reversal of radical politics: popular movements are demobilized and replaced by a disciplined elite party; revolutionary hope is turned into an ideology of domination; social control is intensified to the point where commitment and self-discipline lose all meaning. To a significant degree, obviously, the reversal is self-inflicted—at least in the sense that revolutionary movements destroyed or fatally weakened the old authority structures and then were unable to replace them with democratic institutions. (Whenever the replacement was successful—even when, as in France, it was precariously successful—totalitarian politics had little appeal.)

Totalitarianism is parasitic on failed revolutions: this is so when its agents are themselves revolutionaries, like Stalin, and when they are counterrevolutionaries, like Hitler. Ingsoc is parasitic on English socialism, which it defeats and replaces. And the novelty of totalitarianism is tied, backhandedly, to the novelty of radical politics—to the hopes it engendered, the discipline it taught, and the people it organized.

## III

But I don't want to concede that novelty, for the argument looks rather different today than it did in 1949 and the years immediately following. What struck Orwell, Arendt, Talmon, Milosz, and the others was the sheer success of totalitarian politics. Nazism had been defeated only by overwhelming external force. Inside Germany it seemed to have overcome all opposition, and its officials had actually carried through the systematic murder of millions of people. Stalinism was triumphant not only in Russia, but in Eastern Europe—and then in China too. Milosz's captive minds were really captive. If *1984* was a piece of political science fiction, it hardly required any great imaginative leap. The speeches of Stalinist officials were already written in something very much like "Newspeak," and I don't think Orwell doubted that the two-way television set would actually be in use by 1984, if not sooner.

Compared with all this, merely authoritarian regimes can indeed be made to look like a kind of small-time thuggery: amateurish, corrupt, inefficient. Perhaps, as Orwell's Goldstein says, "the ruling groups were always infected to some extent by liberal ideas" (though it's not hard to list authoritarian rulers of whom that can't plausibly be said); in any case, they "were content to leave loose ends everywhere." They were not ambitious, or they did not have the resources to realize their ambitions. Most of their subjects lived, as they had always lived, more or less at peace.

It was never the intention of the theorists of the '50s to celebrate authoritarianism, but perhaps the celebration is a natural step once the contrast has been drawn in this way. Contemporary conservatives have taken the step with calculated ease. Since authoritarian rulers aren't even touched by messianism, since they neither seek nor pretend to seek social transformation, since all they want is to hold on to their power and prerogatives, not to exercise greater and greater power, they don't produce the terrible upheavals of totalitarian politics. They don't attack the traditional social structure, or turn millions of their subjects into refugees, or systematically murder men, women, and children because of their ethnic identity or their class standing: so we are told. The human costs



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of their rule, therefore, are hardly worth noticing.

But this is to make both politics and political theory a great deal easier than they are. The contrast between totalitarianism and authoritarianism makes sense if we imagine Hitler's and Stalin's regimes as permanent political systems (or as theoretical ideal types). But the contrast makes less sense if we focus on the regimes that are today called totalitarian, that is, if we query the permanence of the totalitarianism described by the theorists of the '50s. The query is appropriate because it is one of the points of the contrast—emphasized heavily by contemporary conservatives—that totalitarianism is stable in a way that authoritarianism is not. The brutality of old-fashioned tyrants is temporary, a brief eruption; authoritarian regimes come and go. But the totalitarian state, because of the deep transformations it brings about and the intense control it exercises over its subjects, is something entirely different: totalitarianism is a long dark night. But is this an accurate account of contemporary politics?

Is it, for that matter, an accurate account of the history of authoritarianism? The easy contrast surely misconstrues the impact of old-fashioned tyranny on its subjects and victims. Consider the tyranny of conquest and imperial rule: the Spanish destruction of Aztec civilization, for example, or the terrible cruelty of the early years of Belgian rule in the Congo. Hannah Arendt begins her own account of the origins of totalitarian politics with the last of these (and with European imperialism generally)—though none of the three features that make for the novelty of totalitarianism are present.

Or consider the history of religious repression: Louis XIV's destruction of French Protestantism, for example. The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Night may represent a brief eruption of brutality, but Louis's campaign was sustained over many years, and it was largely successful, a triumph of authoritarian rule. Or consider the history of ethnic persecution: the slaughter of Armenians by Turks in the early 1910s or the killings of Bengalis in what was then East Pakistan in 1971. In both these cases, there is considerable evidence of planning and coordination.

Or consider the history of political terror: the proscriptions of the late Roman republic and the early empire, when the political elites of the city were systematically slaughtered, first by one military faction, then by another, and finally by the early emperors and their henchmen, seeking not total but absolute power; or the more far-reaching terror of the Zulu emperor Shaka, which has been powerfully evoked in Victor Walter's well-known study and sounds indeed like a primitive totalitarianism—except, again, that none of the special features of totalitarian politics are present.

I don't mean to compare any of these examples of authoritarian brutality with the Holocaust or the Gulag. But the list makes an important point. Old-fashioned authoritarianism is neither petty nor benign. It was the peace that the tyrant brought, after all, that was once called the peace of the grave (as by Byron in *The Bride of Abydos).*

> Mark! where his carnage and his
> conquests cease!
> He makes a solitude and calls it—peace!

Seizing power and staying in power can both be a brutal business. Aristotle certainly understood this when he advised the tyrants of his own time on how to maintain their position: break up traditional patterns of association, cut off the natural leaders of the people, sow distrust and mutual suspicion. It is not an unambitious program, and it doesn't support the radical distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Even the least efficient of authoritarian rulers makes some gesture toward a program of this sort. And what is totalitarianism as an ideal type but a superbly successful Aristotelian tyranny?

## IV

Hitler and Stalin briefly approached the "ideal," and so they encouraged theoretical idealization. But I shall attend more closely to the epigones of Hitler and Stalin, the men who come after, the heirs and imitators. Mass mobilization, political messianism, and intense social control are supposed to produce a new age and a new human being. Totalitarianism does not build upon an existing social base, it creates the material and moral foundations of its own



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

existence. But is there any evidence that any totalitarian regime has accomplished anything like this anywhere in the world?

The place to begin is with the elite movement or party that replaces all the demobilized movements, parties, unions, cooperative associations, sects, factions, and so on. Totalitarianism in the theory of the '50s is more clearly a kind of movement than a kind of state. It requires agitation, disturbance, crisis—the "continuous frenzy" that Orwell describes. Political (as distinct from religious) messianism is an impossible creed without a lively sense of motion, the constant overcoming of material obstacles and, what is probably more important because more dangerous and stirring, of human enemies. The movement must move, the members must march, toward the end of days. In the course of the struggle for power the movement cultivates this sense of motion, and can't relinquish it afterward. In power too, the movement requires permanent revolution, permanent war, or what Brzezinski called "permanent purge," else enthusiasm flags and the new regime, committed in principle to total transformation, is itself transformed into something less than total. When things slow down, when patterns emerge and institutions and relationships take on some sort of stability, totalitarian rule becomes impossible.

Social control too, at least in the heightened form that Orwell gives it, is dependent upon continuous upheaval, crisis, struggle, and instability. All those together breed uncertainty and distrust among the people or among the members of the Party, and mutual distrust (as Aristotle said) is the key to all the forms of tyrannical rule. The greater the distrust, the more total the tyranny. The totalitarian movement-state strives to break up every sort of loyalty among individuals, from class solidarity to friendship and family love, and then to focus undifferentiated loyalty on the Party or the leader of the Party: thus Orwell's Big Brother, whom no one really knows. Every more specific brotherhood is systematically attacked.

The attack on the family is the most important of totalitarianism's internal wars; it has a characteristic form that we know from Russian history. Orwell provides a portrait in his account of the Parsons family—which concludes:

> It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children. And with good reason, for hardly a week passed in which the *Times* did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak—"child hero" was the phrase generally used—had overheard some compromising remark and denounced his parents to the Thought Police.

The reference here is to a specific historical incident. In 1932, Pavlik Morozov, a boy in his early teens and a member of the Young Pioneers, denounced his father to Stalin's secret police. Pavlik was killed by angry relatives and subsequently made into a martyr and "hero" by the Soviet press: the model of a child who put Party and State above "old-fashioned" loyalties. But who could live with such a child? Home would become an unendurable place. And what is unendurable won't be endured, not for long at any rate; parents and children will find their way back to some more stable and trusting pattern of family relations.

Recently, a Russian newspaper reviewed the brief history of "child heroes" and concluded: "There is something fundamentally unnatural in having a child . . . assailing the holy of holies—respect and love for father and mother." A society in which this "holy of holies" is recognized in the official press may be an awful society in many ways, but it is, again, something less than totalitarian.

Something less: the problems with the ideal type can be seen with a special clarity in all those countries to which totalitarianism was exported by force of arms. It is as hard to reproduce as to sustain the sense of perpetual motion on which totalitarian politics depends. The "frenzy" of Party members will seem especially peculiar and artificial if there hasn't been a local struggle for power. Political messianism doesn't follow the sword. Totalitarian states can acquire an empire, as the Russians have done in Eastern Europe, and they can insist upon the supremacy of the Party in the lands they conquer. But whereas in the home country the Party is simultaneously the heir and the annihilator of revolutionary aspiration, in the countries of the empire it is simply an annihilator—and then an agent of foreign rule. It doesn't generate any sort of enthusiasm; its captive minds are prisoners of necessity, not



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

converts to a messianic faith. Among the demobilized people, it produces sullen resentment and sporadic resistance.

The governments of Eastern Europe, especially after the East German uprising of 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Czech spring of 1968, the rise and fall of Poland's Solidarity union in 1980–81, all look like authoritarian regimes, dressed up, as it were, in the ideology of totalitarianism. They rule by brute force—not even their own brute force—and they are concerned above all with holding on. But this is what the leaders of the totalitarian homeland look like too, once the struggle for power has receded into the past: it is as hard to sustain as to export and reproduce the crucial sense of permanent crisis.

## V

Stalin's epigones in Russia (and now Mao's in China) rule their own country like imperial bureaucrats; they resemble the puppets they have installed in neighboring states, and they share the same devitalized purpose. Stalinism might have endured had Stalin lived forever, a figure embodying and evoking terror, personalizing the seizure of power . . . and then the seizure of more and more power.

In another of the essays in *1984 Revisited*, Robert Tucker explores the importance of personality and of the "cult of personality" in totalitarian politics. For reasons he helps us understand, the most intense social control has been achieved under the most heightened form of personal rule. Orwell recognized this fact earlier than anyone else (except, perhaps, the totalitarian leaders themselves), and he proposed to solve the succession problem by making Big Brother immortal: in *1984*, the faceless Party rules permanently behind the mask of an eternal Stalin. Only an extraordinary lack of ambition among the epigones, however, would make this a plausible solution. In fact, would-be leaders are always waiting for the Leader to die (and he does die).

Conceivably, the first succession crisis is functional to the movement-state; it makes for struggles, denunciations, and purges. But the results are so frightening that the survivors are likely to decide, as Stalin's survivors decided, to do things differently next time. And then the charisma doesn't pass on. The installation of a totalitarian leader is unimpressive without the sacrament of blood. In the regime of the epigones, the frenzy ceases, enthusiasm fades. The end of days becomes nothing more than a rhetorical flourish. Ideological zeal is a sign only of conformity and not of conviction. Corruption and cynicism are common at every level of society. About China's rulers we know very little, but the leaders of Russia today are very much like old-fashioned oligarchs: heavy, suspicious, uninspired, brutal—and, like their counterparts in the empire, holding on.

Is Russia today usefully described as a totalitarian regime? One way to answer this question is to talk in terms of a Weberian routinization: the end of days has been postponed, not forgotten; the Party has settled in for the long haul; working for the cause has been transformed from a calling into a career. But I think that an argument of this sort misses the main point. When Weber talked about the routinization of charisma he did not mean to describe the death of charisma. Christianity after its routinization was still a vibrant faith. For all the weight of its new institutions and the frequent corruption of their personnel, its leaders still inspired awe; its central theological doctrines were still capable of evoking passionate belief, disinterested conduct, artistic and intellectual creativity. No one can say that of Soviet Marxism today.

I suppose it isn't inconceivable that there could be a political messianist revival or even a Communist Reformation. But neither of these seems likely. The truth is that none of the totalitarian creeds was rich enough or resonant enough to sustain popular enthusiasm or official rectitude for long. Perhaps no this-worldly creed can survive the survival of this world. Totalitarianism is far more dependent than religious messianism upon a quick success. The revolutions, wars, purges, crises must have a visible end—and then they must have an end. And this suggests that the movement-state may not be capable of routinization but only of decay. Russia today is a dictatorship resting on popular apathy, the hollow shell of a totalitarian regime.

The oligarchs are still brutal, and political opposition is still a dangerous and most often a lonely business. There is no space for dissent or



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

debate, no space for a free intellectual or cultural life. Bureaucratic and police control are probably more strict than in most historical and contemporary authoritarian states. But whether the strictness is an aftereffect of the Stalinist terror or some more lasting feature of the post-Stalinist regime remains unclear. The officials of the regime believe, and they are probably right, that their power can be maintained only by upholding the apparatus of the movement-state—*Gleichschaltung*, parallel hierarchies, party discipline, secret police, and so on—even if none of these serve any "higher" purpose, even if the movement-state doesn't move. Hence no political or cultural thaw can ever be allowed to usher in a genuine spring.

Still, in describing the regime of the oligarchs, it is hard to strike the apocalyptic note so easily struck in the 1950s. One can imagine struggles for power, large-scale proscriptions, great cruelties still to come, but the ideological frenzy and the idealized savagery of the Stalin years look now like a moment in history and not like a historical era. The moment can be repeated in new places, as it has recently been repeated in Cambodia, but it can't be sustained.

I suspect that this conclusion is implicit in the literature of the 1950s, just as it is inherent in the phenomenon that literature attempted to explain. If totalitarianism finds its perfection in the death camps, then it can only be a temporary society. A regime that systematically murders its own people is in one respect at least like a utopian community whose members are pledged to celibacy: neither one of them can last indefinitely. Nor is there any such thing in human life as "continuous frenzy." Nor is there an imaginable political elite that will accept and live with the reality of a "permanent purge." Nor, finally, is it possible to conceive of an ongoing social system in which every participant radically distrusts every other (even if all of them love Big Brother).

Totalitarianism as an ideal type cannot be realized in fact, or it cannot endure. That is true, of course, of all ideal types, but here the common truth has a special pointedness. For totalitarianism *is* the idealization of authoritarian rule. It is Weber's "typological simplification" ruthlessly put into practice: Aristotle's advice to tyrants brought to its logical conclusion, Shaka's terror turned systematic, the Roman proscriptions universalized, and so on. If the idealization doesn't work in the real world, then the theory of totalitarianism needs to be revised.

## VI

Orwell makes the most heroic and perhaps the most original attempt to defend the long dark night thesis. The crucial means of totalitarian endurance, he argues in his novel and more explicitly in the Appendix to the novel, is Newspeak, a language actively fostered by the Ingsoc regime, designed to replace conventional English. Totalitarian endurance is usually seen as an institutional problem; Orwell sees it as an epistemological problem. The solution lies in creating a language that serves "as a medium of expression for the . . . mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc" and that "makes all other modes of thought impossible." Not only explicitly oppositionist thought: every form of irony, sarcasm, doubt, hesitation must be eliminated from the minds of the people, and this is to be achieved in the most direct and simple way: words simply won't be available to formulate, let alone express, ironic, sarcastic, doubtful, or hesitant thoughts.

Were Newspeak established, Orwell writes, "ideas inimical to Ingsoc could only be entertained in a vague wordless form. . . ." This probably means that inimical "ideas" could not be entertained at all. Even vague feelings of unease about the regime, of the sort that "can't be put into words," probably require words before they can be felt—for otherwise they would be nothing more than sensations, and the connection to the regime could not consciously be grasped. Success here means that every inner thought and feeling, even vague thoughts and feelings, would be ideologically controlled. Moreover, to someone who knew only Newspeak, every past utterance would be literally incomprehensible. The break with the past would be definitive, and the projection of the present into the future would be permanent.

But Orwell's argument confuses vocabulary with language, and it confuses the writing of a dictionary with the establishment of a vocabu-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lary. Indeed, the regime can control the dictionary, and it can control the teaching of language in the schools and the use of language in all published materials. There is no reason to think, however, that it can control ordinary conversations or that it can bar slang usages or dominate entirely the rhythms, intonations, juxtapositions, and so on that constitute what we can think of as the linguistic resources of any people who can speak at all. At least, it can't do these things through linguistic means, but only through social and political means: by listening in on every conversation and punishing anyone who speaks (or pauses in speech, or shrugs while speaking) inappropriately. The regime can't rest on Newspeak, then, because the success of Newspeak depends on the success of the regime. Social control is the precondition of linguistic control, and if social control is anything less than total, "ideas inimical to Ingsoc" will find expression.

These won't necessarily be oppositionist ideas. What is more likely than opposition, as I have suggested, is cynicism and corruption. The decay of the totalitarian regime will leave its mark in the language, as in the conduct, of the people: in the sardonic aside, the muttered reproach, the derisive joke and, at the same time, in the obsequious greeting and the overemphasized slogan.

Here is the likely form of doublethink. It won't be a matter of simultaneously knowing and not-knowing, as Orwell thought, but rather of performing in a certain way while deriding the performance: a coexistence of opportunism and contempt. This is not a mental set consistent with the kind of political mobilization or messianic zeal described by the early theorists of totalitarianism, and while it represents an accommodation to social control, it is also an evasion of anything that can plausibly be called total control. Terror, wrote the Jacobin St. Just in his private journal, makes the heart grow cold. There is no merely linguistic remedy for this coldness, no way in which words alone, however rigorously they are defined, can heat the heart.

Coming—

In Our Next Issue:

**The Politics of Michel Foucault**

*by Michael Walzer*

## VII

What are we to call this regime of coldness, this government of opportunists and cynics? I suggest that we call it *failed totalitarianism.* It is the living tomb of a utopian—or better, of an antiutopian—project. One might think of it as an authoritarian state with a peculiar (and a peculiarly brutal) history. In fact, however, failed totalitarianism is one of the more common forms of the modern state, and it isn't necessary to go through a Nazi or Stalinist terror in order to achieve it.

One can also achieve it by imitation. Proclaim the messianist creed and establish the disciplined elite. Failure is instantaneous: no one believes the creed; everyone evades the discipline. But the result can be repressive enough, for the imitation commonly extends to torture, censorship, prison camps, secret police, and so on. Thus the single-party states of the Third World, with their faked ideologies and their ideologically justified brutality. These regimes are the work of political leaders who have, perhaps, the ambition but not the resources necessary for totalitarian rule; they can't quite manage the required upheaval, nor can they achieve a genuine *Gleichschaltung* of social spheres. Instead, they and their subjects enjoy what Veblen called the advantages of coming second: they escape the trauma of creation, the revolutionary crisis out of which totalitarian politics was born, and they inherit the most advanced, which in this case means the most decayed, form of the politics they imitate.

The result is one or another variety of authoritarian rule, dressed up to look "total," in which this or that aspect of communist or fascist ideology is haphazardly acted out. A mixed regime, new but not importantly new—and this outcome may well suggest the future of those totalitarian states whose failure is more authentic.

We ought to distinguish, I think, between



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the moment of totalitarian terror and the regime that makes the moment possible. In our minds and memories the moment is (and should be) eternal: we can never forget it or give up trying to explain how it happened. But the regime has a short life, and we won't succeed in understanding it if we assign it a permanent place in the typologies of political science. That would be like sneaking the apocalypse into a standard chronology. The end of days is not a date, and totalitarianism is not a regime.

We might better think of totalitarianism as the name we give to the most frightening form of authoritarian rule. It is a form continuous with the other forms, but marked by a sense of secular willfulness that is immediately recognizable as a general feature of modern culture. Against a background of urbanization, economic development, nation-building, and large-scale warfare, tyrannical ambition is transformed: it reaches farther than ever before. But except in the matter of murder, it isn't notably successful. It doesn't produce a new man and a new woman; it doesn't produce a new language; it can't sustain the enthusiasm of its subjects or transform their primary loyalties. The thrust toward totality is so extravagant a version of willfulness that it is doomed to failure.

And failure brings with it what we can immediately recognize as a central feature of premodern culture: the rulers aim above all at maintaining themselves and serve no "higher" purpose. They repress their enemies, control their subjects, and look only for some marginal improvement in their domestic or international position. They make their peace with the family; their language is a bureaucratic version of Oldspeak; they make only the most routine ideological gestures. In a certain sense, they live off the memory of the totalitarian moment, but they have no intention of repeating that moment. They are the authoritarian autocrats and oligarchs of our own time, doing what autocrats and oligarchs have always done.

Failed totalitarianism, both in its authentic and in its exported and imitated versions, may well be one of the relatively stable forms of authoritarian politics. For its leaders, like the absolutist monarchs of the early modern period, have managed to create a fairly cohesive elite. The members of this elite are bound together more by place and privilege than by doctrinal commitment, more by personal than by ideological ambition, but they are bound together nonetheless; they don't break under pressure; they have too much to lose. It is not quite what Orwell imagined, though his juxtaposition of Party and proles does capture something of the class structure of failed totalitarianism. Djilas's *New Class*, which appeared just after the spate of books on totalitarian politics and provides a useful corrective to their (anti-) utopianism, suggests what is probably a more accurate, and certainly a more conventional, sociology.

But however cohesive the new class is, the regime it constitutes is not exempt from internal and unplanned transformations. That popular resistance is still possible has been demonstrated repeatedly in Eastern Europe. "The proletarians will never revolt," O'Brien tells Winston Smith in *1984*, "not in a thousand years or a million. . . . There is no way in which the Party can be overthrown." As an account of the internal politics of the movement-state, this is surely wrong: for we have seen both the decay of the Party and the power of the proles. Recent events in Poland suggest that one way of dealing with these phenomena, one response to the ultimate failure of failed totalitarianism, is a military takeover and an overt return to authoritarian rule.

The situation isn't very different in pre-totalitarian tyrannies, which are also open to unplanned transformations—one of which, of course, is the totalitarian seizure of power itself. Indeed, the routine repressiveness of authoritarian regimes helps to account for the secretive, disciplined, and elitist character of the party that seizes power—and also for its (short-lived) mass appeal. Totalitarian ambition is bred by authoritarian politics, and terror on the Stalinist or Nazi model seems more likely to figure in the future of old-fashioned tyrannies than in the future of failed totalitarianisms.

The line that marks off these two is hard to draw, and to insist upon its central importance doesn't serve any useful political or moral purpose. More accurately, that insistence serves a repugnant purpose: it provides an apologia for



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authoritarian politics. That apologia was no part of the original theory, whose terms were fixed by the Holocaust and the Gulag. Orwell and those who followed him were driven to explain what looked indeed, though not in the sense of the messianic faith, like the end of days. But we must come to grips with the return of tyranny after the failures of messianism, with the sheer persistence of regimes that are ugly enough, though neither utopian nor antiutopian—with *non-ideal brutality*. This is the real world of 1984. The dominant fact about politics today is the dominance of repression, censorship, torture, and murder, all of a largely traditional kind, though the traditionalism is sometimes masked by ideological pretension.

Authoritarian rule has turned out to be the true legacy of totalitarian movements and parties. I suspect it is also their nursing mother. Those who defend authoritarianism because it isn't "total" have failed to grasp the historical connection between what they defend and what they decry.

---

Some paragraphs of this essay are drawn from a talk on J. L. Talmon and the theory of totalitarianism, prepared for a colloquium in Talmon's memory held in Jerusalem under the sponsorship of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in June 1982. □

**"This book will transform the debate about distributive justice beyond all recognition."**

*—CHARLES TAYLOR, McGill University*

"Michael Walzer presents a sophisticated new theory of equality and supports it by surveying an extraordinarily rich array of social and political ideologies and arrangements....Fascinating and important." *—JUDITH JARVIS THOMPSON, M.I.T.*

"A book which bridges philosophy and social policy in the most engaging and fruitful way... the foundation of a new, emergent liberalism." *—DANIEL BELL, Harvard University*

**SPHERES OF JUSTICE**

*A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*

**MICHAEL WALZER**

Herman Landshoff

$19.95 at bookstores, or direct from the publisher
TOLL FREE (800) 638-3030
Major credit cards accepted

**BASIC BOOKS, INC.**
10 East 53rd Street, New York 10022



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert B. Reich

# Human Capital & Economic Policy

*From* The Next American Frontier *by Robert B. Reich. Copyright © 1983 by Robert B. Reich. Reprinted by permission of Times Books. The sections here reprinted are taken from chapters 10 and 11. Ellipses indicate where passages have been skipped within a chapter.* — Eds.

## Dead-End Labor

Persistent unemployment and pervasive mismatches between skills and job opportunities are symptoms of a basic problem: America's labor force is not participating in the growing segments of the world economy. One out of every six jobs in the American economy now depends on the automobile industry. One out of every five unskilled manufacturing jobs in America is in the textile industry. All told, one out of every three American workers now depends for a livelihood, directly or indirectly, on American industries that are losing rapidly in international competition.

True, the economy performed extraordinarily well during the last decade in terms of creating 21 million new jobs for the surge of young people and married women who entered the labor force. But a large percentage of these jobs were dead ends. Seventy percent of them (outside government) were in services and retailing; almost all these jobs are sheltered from international trade. Thirty percent of the new jobs (employing more than 7 million people) were in eating and drinking places (mostly as waiters, waitresses, cooks, and kitchen helpers), health services (hospital orderlies and attendants), and business services (typists, clerks, messengers, deliverymen, security guards, low-paid salesclerks, cashiers, janitors). Since 1973 the increase in employment in eating and drinking places alone has been greater than the total employment in America's auto and steel industries combined. Employment in finance, insurance, and real estate has increased substantially, but most of the new jobs in these industries also have been in low-level clerical and sales positions. Some new jobs also have been created in the shoe, textile, and tanning industries, but many of these have gone to illegal immigrants (an estimated 6 million of them are now working in the United States), who work for subminimum wages in order to compete with workers doing much the same tasks in Southeast Asia.

Even America's high-technology industries are filling almost as many dead-end jobs as skill-intensive ones. Production workers now constitute 45 percent of the American electronics-industry work force. They do such things as assemble integrated circuits, stuff circuits into printed boards, and transfer silicon wafers from ovens to acid baths and electroplating tanks—unskilled and tedious work. And because these production workers compete directly with workers in Taiwan, South Korea, and China, their pay is low, and declining in real terms. Between 1972 and 1978 their average salary increased by only 7 percent. By 1979 they were earning $4.52 an hour, or about $9,000 a year. (In contrast, between 1972 and 1978 the average salary of electronics engineers increased 33 percent; by 1979 they were earning an average of $48,000 yearly.)

Most of these new jobs in the American



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economy—in menial occupations sheltered from international trade or in low-paying assembly operations in direct competition with foreign workers—have no future. Wages do not increase with experience. Few or no benefits attach to these jobs. There is almost no job security. The majority of Americans in jobs like these are unprotected against an incapacitating accident, a heart attack, an illness, or a sudden layoff.

It is true that even if America were to adapt itself to flexible-system production, there still would be some routine jobs to be filled by relatively unskilled workers. Not everyone is capable of maintaining precision machinery, developing software, or participating on a problem-solving team. But it seems a safe guess that among the millions of Americans now locked into dead-end jobs, there are vast numbers whose latent talents and untapped capacities for learning could be put to far more productive uses.

America has no mechanisms to shift its work force out of unemployment and dead-end jobs into the kinds of flexible-system industries where Americans can gain and maintain competitive advantage while preserving or increasing their real incomes.

Unemployment insurance is the main public program for Americans out of work. But it is designed to tide people over during temporary periods of unemployment, not to help the large numbers of workers who are unemployable because they have no marketable skill. Coverage is limited, providing only a fraction of the worker's previous earnings (usually one-half) for only 26 weeks. It is not available at all to people who have not yet entered the work force. And there are wide variations among the states in eligibility and benefits. Six states and the District of Columbia provide benefits that extend slightly beyond 26 weeks. Another 13 weeks are available under a federally mandated scheme applying to states where unemployment has been particularly severe. Most states also place a ceiling on the amount of weekly benefits that can be obtained; where the ceiling is low, as in New York, Texas, and California, workers who before had held relatively high-paying jobs may have to get by on only a small fraction of their previous salaries. Given these restrictions and inconsistencies, it is not surprising that only one-half of America's unemployed receive unemployment insurance at any given time.

Public welfare, in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, is of little help. In half the states the program is available only to single-parent families; in the other 25 states it also applies to two-parent families in which the principal wage earner is unemployed. But in order to qualify, the family's assets (including house and car) must not exceed $1,000. At most, the program reaches only the hard core of America's poor.

The United States does have job-training programs, but they are generally restricted to the unskilled. There are no programs to retrain people with obsolete skills or those who wish to improve their skills. America's publicly financed job-training programs do not prepare even the unskilled for real careers. They are oriented primarily toward "public service" jobs rather than toward new jobs in the private sector. In 1980, $6 billion of $11 billion in job-training money was spent on public service employment. Many states and localities have used these job-training programs to hire people they would have hired anyway. And even these public service jobs have been temporary. In 1980, 40 percent of the job trainees were unemployed after leaving the program. In any event, the Reagan administration is cutting back these programs severely: Department of Labor outlays for job-training programs declined to $4.5 billion in 1982 from $7.8 billion in 1981, despite the addition of almost 2 million men and women to the unemployment rolls.

The private sector does provide some training. In 1981 American firms spent more than $30 billion on courses for their employees, affecting about 6 percent of the labor force. (This is roughly half the cost of higher education in America.) The Bell System, for example, spent $1.7 billion conducting 12,000 courses for up to 30,000 employees daily at 1,300 training sites around the country. Xerox opened a $75 million training and management center, training 12,000 employees a year.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The vast majority of these programs, however, provide training in narrow jobs or in processes unique to the company rather than in broadly applicable skills. There is an obvious reason for this. Broader training would render employees much more marketable, and therefore require that the firm pay them a higher wage in order to retain them. Few firms are so generous (or foolish) as to want to bid up the wages of their work force in this way. In any event, companies are now spending about the same amount on training per employee that they spent in 1969—even though the need for such training is much greater now that America's competitive position is in jeopardy.

Special government assistance has been available to workers and communities injured by foreign trade—to provide relocation, retraining, and extended unemployment insurance to workers whose jobs have been eliminated because of imports and to aid communities facing economic decline. But like unemployment compensation and job training, these "trade adjustment" programs have been disconnected from the process of industrial change in America. As a result, they, too, have failed to help ease the transition of the labor force to sophisticated-system production. Administered by the Department of Labor and far removed from such forums as the Treasury, Commerce, and the office of the U.S. trade representative, where tariffs, quotas, and bailouts for industry are formulated, worker adjustment programs have been encumbered by administrative problems of determining whether imports are to blame for job loss and of deciding where workers should relocate and for what jobs they should seek retraining. In practice, these programs have provided workers with little more than extended unemployment compensation. Since 1975, 1.2 million American workers have received cash payments under these programs, totaling $4 billion. Yet only 36,000 workers have obtained any training, and only 4,000 have received job search allowances. In 1981 cash benefits totaled $1.5 billion, but the training budget was only $17 million. A survey of laid-off workers who had exhausted their unemployment benefits revealed that only 20 percent had received counseling, only 8 percent had received job referrals, and only 7 percent job training. (The Reagan administration has also targeted trade adjustment assistance for substantial reductions.)

The only job-training programs with direct ties to the nation's economic development have been conducted by the Defense Department. Since World War II the military has trained generations of Americans. A survey undertaken in 1964 showed that 18 percent of all nuclear power workers and 45 percent of all licensed nuclear operators learned their skills in the U.S. Navy. Many of the nation's skilled machinists, electricians, machine operators, and computer programmers also received their training while in military service. Defense-related education programs spawned new skills: the GI Bill following the war enabled 7.5 million veterans to attend college or technical school. The National Defense Education Act of 1958, inspired by Sputnik, provided low-interest education loans, teacher training, and funds for doctoral research. All these programs, in turn, helped ensure a well-trained work force, which contributed to America's economic development well into the 1960s.

But defense-related job-training and education programs can no longer be relied upon to shift America's labor force into higher-valued production. These programs have been reduced in recent years, as more defense resources have been channeled to advanced weapons systems and other sorts of military hardware. Because new weapons technology is so specialized, the training that is provided has tended to be less broadly applicable to civilian occupations than before.

Most community and regional development programs have been similarly irrelevant to real economic progress. Firms seeking to diversify or to develop new products in an effort to regain competitiveness seldom, if ever, base their location decisions on the financial lures offered by needy communities—such as tax abatements, low-interest financing, or transportation facilities, most of which are made possible by federal grants. For one thing, the real value of these offerings constitutes, at most, a very small fraction of the costs of starting and operating a new enterprise, particularly when compared to factors such as



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prevailing wage rates, the availability of workers with particular skills, access to raw materials and suppliers, and local energy costs. Perhaps more significantly, so many jurisdictions now offer these inducements that they largely offset one another. As communities bid to attract businesses, one city's gain is another's loss, and little or no additional investment occurs. Federal programs finance much of this competition. For example, program eligibility standards have been drawn so loosely for grants from the Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration that 80 percent of American communities are now eligible; more than half the nation's locales have been deemed eligible for urban development action grant programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and as a practical matter, every community in America can offer low-interest loans financed by federally subsidized industrial development bonds.

The problems of worker and community adjustment are exacerbated by other public policies. The tax code, for example, effectively subsidizes capital mobility, but not the use of unemployed labor or underused public infrastructures. Firms in declining industries can typically take a tax loss on the plant and equipment that they leave behind, treat the cost of moving their headquarters as a deductible business expense, and take advantage of accelerated depreciation and tax credits for their investments in new plant and equipment elsewhere. But they reap no advantage from keeping their former employees or from utilizing the infrastructures of their former communities. Thus the tax code biases firms' incentives against staying put.

Similarly, American antitrust laws recognize that restrictions on mergers should be relaxed for failing firms, which otherwise might be deprived of the capital they need to regain competitive strength. But businesses that have been granted such antitrust immunity have not been required to accept even limited responsibility for their workers or communities. On the contrary, the resulting mergers have often meant closing or relocating the failing firm's facilities, with no provisions for labor or community adjustment.

The net result of all these programs has been the continued atrophy of the American labor force. Workers' skills are not upgraded to fit them for flexible-system production. . . .

Other social policies (or their absence) have conspired to render much of America's labor force physically immobile. The fragmented administration of welfare and unemployment insurance, imposing different requirements and offering different benefits in every state, itself has discouraged mobility. Many unemployed Americans are reluctant to look for work in another part of the country for fear that they will lose the minimal assistance they have.

Federal housing policies have locked the labor force into stricken communities and regions. Generous credit assistance to homeowners (available through the Farmers Home Administration, the Federal National Mortgage Assistance Administration, and the Veterans Administration), coupled with tax breaks (in the form of mortgage interest deductions and the ability to "roll over" proceeds from the sale of one's old house to purchase a new house without paying any tax on the transaction) have transformed the nation's housing stock into many middle-class Americans' primary form of savings. With so much at stake in one's home, the financial and psychological costs of moving are extremely high. This is particularly true if local housing prices are depressed as a result of a plant closing or any other manifestation of local economic decline, while housing prices in growing areas of the country are driven up by the increasing demand.

Those who cannot afford to own their homes are often even more trapped. The nation's stock of low-cost rental housing units is decreasing rapidly. In Washington, D.C., alone, 13,600 housing units have been converted to condominiums in the last five years. Only 2 percent of Washington's rental units are available for occupancy at any given time. More than 10,000 area residents are now on the waiting list for public housing. For America's poor, it takes a long time to obtain adequate accommodation. Once a rental unit is obtained, the occupants are understandably reluctant to leave. Rent-control laws in many jurisdictions



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

further discourage the unemployed or underemployed from looking for jobs elsewhere since the laws deter private builders from erecting other low-cost housing while allowing rents on existing units to shoot up if the current tenant forays out in search of work in another city.

Other social policies also are rendering the nation's labor force less adaptable. America's fragmented and expensive system of health care causes many Americans to fear that a debilitating illness will use up their savings and impoverish their families. Planned cutbacks in Medicare will only heighten this fear. Medical insecurity discourages people from searching for new jobs in locations far removed from family and friends who might sustain them in time of hardship.

Mass transit and day care represent other failed opportunities for helping American labor shift into new production. If adequately funded, both sorts of programs would allow workers to search for work within a large radius of their homes. But mass transit and day care are becoming some of the first victims of America's economic decline. Subway systems in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago are near collapse, plagued by aging equipment, vandalism, and frequent breakdowns and derailments. Bus systems in other major cities are experiencing periodic shutdowns because of insufficient funding. And the demand for day-care facilities is far outrunning their availability.

In all these ways America is inadvertently accelerating its economic decline. By failing to appreciate and act on the link between these social programs and future productivity, America is condemning itself to a long and painful economic transition. Insecurity born of the fear of sudden, arbitrary, and unanticipated loss—whether of job, home, or health—does not inspire people to new productive feats. To the contrary, insecurities like these discourage risk-taking and constrain adaptability. People who feel insecure want to keep what they have, even at the cost of some hardship and discomfort; the unknown could be far worse. In the face of such insecurity, people will seek better lives for themselves and their families only when their situation is truly desperate—as generations of immigrants will attest. . . .

**The Era of Human Capital**

Above all, a false choice—the free market versus central planning, business culture versus civic culture—has prevented us from understanding the central importance of human capital to America's future.

Unlike high-volume production, where most of a firm's value is represented by physical assets, the principal stores of value in sophisticated-system enterprises are human assets. Specialized machines and unskilled workers cannot adapt easily to new situations. Flexible machines and teams of skilled workers can. Only people can recognize and solve novel problems; machines can merely repeat solutions already programmed within them. The future prosperity of America and every other industrialized country will depend on their citizens' ability to recognize and solve new problems, for the simple reason that processes that make the solution to older problems routine are going to be the special province of developing nations. Industries of the future will not depend on physical "hardware," which can be duplicated anywhere, but on the human "software," which can retain a technological edge.

Financial capital formation is becoming a less important determinant of a nation's well-being than human capital formation. Financial capital is highly mobile. It crosses international borders with the speed of an electronic impulse. International savings are flowing around the globe to wherever they can be put to use. The eagerness of Western bankers to recycle petrodollars to Poland and other high-risk countries is evidence enough. But a nation's store of human capital is relatively immobile internationally, apart from a few high-flying scientists and engineers. The skills, knowledge, and capacity for teamwork within a nation's labor force will determine that nation's collective standard of living.

The preeminence of human capital in sophisticated-system production gives new urgency to the old problem that markets alone fail to generate enough investment in human skills. Incentives to invest in human capital differ fundamentally from incentives to invest in physical capital because human capital invest-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment and the productivity that flows from it are necessarily social. A firm contemplating worker training knows that some employees, once trained, will leave the company. It invests less in human capital than it would if it could somehow ensure that the workers would stay on and apply their new productivity to benefit the firm. Meanwhile, the next company neglects developing its own work force, confident that luring qualified workers away from the other firm will be cheaper than setting up its own training program. Because companies cannot force their workers to remain in their jobs and pay off the investment in increased productivity, no firm spends as much on human capital as it should (and would, if it could only reap the full benefits).

Even individual workers are apt to underinvest in their own training. When a person decides how much and what kind of training to get, he is usually ill-informed about the value of a certain skill since that value is determined in the context of a job. He is uncertain about how well the investment will pay off for him, and the uncertainty makes him reluctant to spend much of his time or money on learning new skills. And even if he could be certain of the future value of investing in his own human capital (in terms of increased earnings), he may not be able to afford a year or two of training in new skills. While loans are available for investments in physical capital, many workers are forced to finance their human capital investments themselves. They cannot offer lenders an interest in their more productive future selves as collateral against a training loan. The lesson is that unaided market forces lead workers, like firms, to underinvest in human capital.

This pattern of "market failures" is complicated by the fact that in flexible-system enterprises the real value of a worker's skill depends not solely on his own training but also on how his abilities complement and enhance the skills of his co-workers. When productivity gains flow over time from an integrated working unit, it makes no sense to depend wholly on individuals' cost-and-return calculations to set the level of human capital investment.

In short, we are entering a new era of productivity in which the costs, the process, and the return from investments in human capital all are inescapably social. In the era of human capital and flexible-system production, failing to recognize this and to respond with the right mechanisms to supplement the market means stifling the sources of future economic growth.

But the fact is that America now is doing little to build new human capital, and the nation is wasting its present stock. We have organized production in a way that squanders our talents. Some of America's most gifted citizens are engaged in manipulating abstract symbols, with no result other than the rearrangement of industrial assets and the replacement of names on organization charts. Other citizens are unemployed or working in dead-end jobs that are sheltered from international competition. America displays great ingenuity in revitalizing its old physical assets: a Procter & Gamble factory that once made the ill-fated Pringle's potato chips now produces Pampers; many of bankrupt Braniff's jets now fly the "friendly skies." But America is sadly neglectful of its human assets. All too often, when a company fails, its plant and equipment are quickly redeployed, but its workers are—in effect—scrapped.

Unless America moves quickly into a new era in which upgrading and using our human capital become a central concern, however, our future wealth will come primarily from extracting coal, timber, and grain from our lands, from assembling advanced components that have been designed and fabricated elsewhere, and from distributing the resulting products to our own citizens. We will become a nation of extractors, assemblers, and retailers—relatively poor by the standards of the rest of the world.

Already America's gross national product per person (a crude measure of economic well-being, to be sure) is lower than it is in several other industrialized countries. Our average life expectancy is lower than in 14 other industrialized countries, and our unemployment rate higher. We have higher rates of infant mortality. We enjoy less job security. These are illustrations of long-term trends that had already begun 15 years ago. They will worsen,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unless we act deliberately and strategically to speed the movement of capital and labor into higher-valued production.

But ideologies resist change, particularly when change seems to threaten people's economic security. The process of long-term decline, once under way, has a self-perpetuating quality. It rigidifies old ideologies and engenders a widespread conservatism. It also breeds divisiveness as each group discovers it can preserve its own standard of living only by appropriating a portion of another group's declining wealth.

The dilemma is that the groups seeking to seize assets from each other are often the very ones that must collaborate if real growth is to occur. The clearest example is in labor-management relations. Here the portion of the pie shared by workers has been declining as inflation has outstripped wage hikes. Trying to recoup, unions demand catch-up raises, only to find that other unions do the same, generating another round of inflation. And as corporate managers harden their positions in the face of declining profits, they are apt to resort to hostile counterstrategies: hiring consultants to "bust" their unions; moving factories to other states or countries. The result is likely to be a breakdown in cooperation between unions and management, possibly sparking crippling rounds of strikes, which will ensure there will be even less product to spread around. Only when an entire industry faces collapse—as is now the case with automobiles, steel, and rubber—do labor and management begin to recognize their common interests, and by then it is usually too late for affirmative change. There is only time enough to make wage concessions and to form political coalitions seeking protection against imports, both of which merely perpetuate the underlying problems or pass them on to consumers and other industries.

American society is now rife with other "beggar-thy-neighbor" tactics, many of which are rational from the standpoint of the individual actor but tragically irrational for society as a whole:

- the asset rearranging undertaken through conglomerate merger, manipulation of balance sheets, and schemes of tax avoidance;
- exorbitant salaries and bonuses provided to executives in America's largest companies;
- the rising incidence of employee theft and insider dealings;
- the political demands for tariffs, quotas, and bailouts to protect companies against foreign competitors;
- and the refusal by many middle-income taxpayers to foot any longer the bill for social services.

The vicious circle has closed: As the economy continues to decline, Americans grow more cynical about collective endeavor. Their consequential retreat into egoism merely accelerates the decline since collaboration is the only way to reverse direction.

Altering the ideological lenses through which many Americans have come to view government, business, and the economy will be difficult. It ultimately will depend on the quality of U.S. politics (a subject to which we will return). But in the short term, several changes can be made at least to slow the decline and reduce the fear and insecurity that fuel it.

America could take several immediate steps to help shift into higher-valued production. These steps could overcome bottlenecks and constraints that now retard economic change and also serve to ameliorate the burdens that make change disproportionately painful to certain groups. They could be accomplished by merely altering the mix of tax incentives and subsidies flowing to American business, which now encourage paper entrepreneurialism and historic preservation and discourage investments in human capital.

For example, in place of public service job-training programs that merely perpetuate dead-end labor, we could provide unemployed workers with vouchers that they could cash in at companies for on-the-job training. Firms that accepted the vouchers would have half their training costs paid by the government, for up to three years. The program could be financed by a payroll tax paid by employees and employers. Any worker unemployed longer than three months would be eligible. The virtue of such a program is that it would match



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

training to specific industrial needs and, by ensuring that companies themselves finance part of the training, help target program funds to firms that are serious about employing the newly trained workers. The program also would create incentives for companies to locate in high-unemployment, low-skilled regions, the work forces of which would collectively represent a substantial subsidy.

One variation on this theme would feature retraining vouchers. These would be available to any worker who had been employed for more than two years at his present job and wished to upgrade his skills. The vouchers could be cashed in at universities or accredited training facilities, which would be reimbursed by the government.

Programs like these would quickly pay for themselves. In West Germany, which has similar programs, the cost per participant is approximately $14,000 per year, once savings from reduced unemployment costs are netted out. This sum is likely to be far smaller than the new productivity benefits that are generated. Also, empirical evidence suggests that companies do respond to wage subsidies by increasing employment as well as by reducing their rate of price increases.

In addition to such direct subsidies, tax incentives could be used to encourage companies to invest in upgrading their work forces and communities. The tax code now provides incentives leading in just the opposite direction: companies that wish to desert their workers and communities in pursuit of greener pastures now can deduct their costs of moving as a business expense, write off the plant and machinery left behind, and obtain tax credits and accelerated depreciation against new plant and machinery purchased at the new location. On the other hand, education and training costs expected to be incurred for the purpose of preparing employees for new jobs in which they are not currently engaged cannot be deducted from current income. This policy preference generates large social costs as workers and communities are left stranded within vast pockets of unemployment.

To reverse this policy preference, the tax code might permit companies to claim tax benefits for retraining their older workers for new jobs. Just as a tax depreciation now can be taken against machines that are gradually becoming obsolete, the tax code might also permit employers to set aside an annual tax-deductible reserve fund for human capital development, based on the number of workers on the payroll. The accumulated funds would be used for retraining and upgrading the work force within a certain number of years of their being set aside, or else the deduction would be lost. The tax code also might reward companies for remaining in their communities by giving them deductions proportional to their length of stay. In effect, this would be a kind of reverse depreciation—recognizing that the social benefits of remaining within a community (and the social costs of leaving it) often increase with the duration of a company's stay.

Tax reform might also eliminate the inconsistencies that invite paper entrepreneurialism. As of now, the tax code rewards corporations and individuals for rearranging assets and speculating on their future value. The code confuses economically sterile transactions and productive investments in new wealth. It does this by, among other things, making interest payments on loans for any investment tax-deductible. One avenue of reform would be to allow interest deductions to be taken only for the purchase of new assets or the modernization of old ones. Under this rule, mergers and acquisitions would not qualify for tax deductions. Nor would commodity futures, paintings by old masters, or real estate. Lest millions of middle-class homeowners suddenly be impoverished by this measure, however, mortgage interest payments on one's principal residence would still be deductible even for older houses, but the deduction would be limited to, say, $5,000 per year.

There are many other ways in which incentives could be restructured to encourage human capital investment. For example, companies now have little to lose by laying off their employees during downturns. By foisting their payroll expenses onto the states' unemployment insurance funds, they reduce their fixed costs. Then, when the economy improves, the companies hire back their employees. This merely encourages employers to consider their employees as fungible commodities and dis-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

courages them (and their employees) from making long-term investments in training. It also promotes needless unemployment.

An alternative scheme would be to make companies' payroll contributions to the unemployment insurance system depend directly on the extent to which their former employees have been forced to use the system in the past. If a company's practice was to lay off many of its employees every time there was a downturn in the business cycle—shifting the carrying costs for its labor "stock" onto the community—its unemployment insurance premium would be substantially higher than that of an identical company that had kept its workers employed. Like any other insured entity, the former company would be deemed a relatively bad risk and would pay accordingly. If unemployment insurance rates were directly pegged to a company's employment history in this way, companies would have more of an incentive to maintain their work forces intact and to invest in their long-term development.

Other changes could be made in programs that use business subsidies to attract investment to various regions of the country. America's economy has come to be based on distinct economic regions, each with its own climate, raw materials, demographics, and special needs. Major business investments ripple throughout a region, fostering skills, spinning off new innovations (consider "Silicon Valley" around Stanford University and Route 128 around Harvard and MIT), and spawning networks of suppliers that are dependent on the region's major industries. Similarly, a region's special problems—traffic congestion, inadequate sewage treatment, disposal of toxic wastes, water shortages—are largely a function of the regional pattern of industry. Within these regional economies, public and private investments are inextricably linked. But as capital markets have become national and even international, bank lenders and institutional investors have become almost oblivious to these linkages. Private capital markets now focus narrowly on an individual company's bottom line. Across America, money that used to remain within regions is now pouring out. Money market funds have grown to more than $200 billion, from only $11 billion at the end of 1978; most of this growth has been at the expense of financial institutions, mainly in small towns. The public response to this problem has been a welter of local tax abatement schemes, industrial development bonds, urban development action grants, and Community Development Administration loans—all spread so widely and so thinly across the land that their net effects cancel one another out, burdening taxpayers and granting companies pure windfalls that fail to influence location decisions.

Instead of this patchwork, and with no greater expenditure, the federal government might establish regional banks to provide low-interest long-term loans to industries that agree to restructure themselves to become more competitive. The banks would also supply cities and towns in the region with low-interest financing for maintaining and developing infrastructure such as roads and sewage-treatment plants. Bank directors would be appointed by state governors. The banks would finance themselves by issuing government-guaranteed bonds and shares of stock.

Some of these bonds and stocks could be made available to union pension funds. Pension funds are rapidly becoming a primary source of industry financing in America. Public employee pension-fund assets now exceed $200 billion; private employee funds, $450 billion. AT&T's pension fund alone is up to $31 billion. Indeed, such funds are now America's largest single source of investment, underpinning stock values as individual investors abandon the equity market. While private investors have dumped more than $20 billion worth of stocks since 1978, pension funds have increased their equity holdings by a greater amount. This year pension funds are expected to absorb $11 billion of new corporate debt and most of the new equity issues.

But a substantial part of this investment has been unrelated to America's human and economic development. Pension funds now hold $12 billion in foreign securities and another $13 billion in real estate. By 1990, if present trends continue, 22 percent of pension-fund assets will be invested in these ways. The potential social benefits flowing from investment in a regional economy have not been



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

considered in these investment decisions. The investment of a given proportion of pension-fund assets in regional development banks would help spur the economy and thereby benefit American workers over the long term.

Regional development also could be promoted through regional-based training programs. Participating companies within a geographic region might pool their training activities, with each company paying one-half of 1 percent of its payroll costs into a common training fund. The government would provide matching funds. The resulting training centers would contract with the participating companies to provide employees with appropriate training and retraining. The companies would help in the design of these programs.

Many companies are too small to provide their employees with adequate training and retraining. But through combining their efforts and receiving additional public funding, training programs could reach a scale that would make them worthwhile. With participating companies directly involved, the programs could have a multiplier effect throughout the area, increasing the quality of the regional work force and attracting more sophisticated jobs to the area.

Whatever form these programs might take, the government programs flowing to businesses cannot be redirected to economic adjustment unless government has the institutional capacity to view all its programs in light of the nation's long-term economic health. The government now has no way to monitor the aggregate impact of these programs on particular industries. Defense procurement has a powerful effect on the economic development of the nation, spawning entirely new industries, setting the direction for their future development, enriching or impoverishing regions whose economies depend on defense contracts, employing one-third of the nation's scientists and engineers, contributing more than one-third of its total research and development budget, and training a large number of its skilled machinists. Other policies—tariffs, quotas, marketing orders, price supports, bailouts, federal loans and loan guarantees, subsidized insurance, and special tax breaks—also affect the pattern of industrial development. Government programs that promote certain industries or businesses amount to 13.9 percent of the nation's gross national product.

But these programs have been unrelated to the goal of long-term economic growth. The government now gives $445 million in tax breaks to the timber industry and $2 billion in subsidies to the dairy industry, but offers no special encouragement to the semiconductor industry. It spends five times as much on research and development for commercial fisheries as it does for steel; $6 billion in loans and loan guarantees go to the shipbuilding industry, compared to $940 million to the automobile industry. Without the institutional capacity to focus these programs on the competitive performance of our economy as a whole, government policy will inevitably serve the politically strongest or most active industries and businesses.

One small step toward a more strategic and more publicly accountable approach to national economic policy, therefore, would be to establish a public board to monitor these programs, perhaps located in the White House's Office of Management and Budget. As part of its responsibility, the board would each year recommend to Congress and to the president what changes should be made in programs that may be retarding national economic development.

Taken together, changes like these would constitute a modest start toward a dynamic economy. Of course, before we were to launch on any one of them, we would want to know a great deal more about its likely effects on business strategies and possible substantive or administrative difficulties. But even if they all were to be successfully implemented, they would not be a panacea. For America to enter fully into the era of human capital will require more dramatic changes in the way we organize ourselves. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Simon Leys

# The Death of Lin Biao

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This essay had been commissioned and accepted by the publishers of Yao Ming-le's book on the death of the Chinese leader Lin Biao, to be used as the Introduction. At the last minute, the publishers rejected it—allegedly, Yao Ming-le's representatives had objected to its "excessively polemical" character.*

Our age, which takes pride in the unprecedented scope, speed, and sophistication of its information, will probably go down in history as the Age of Credulity. This is a paradox only in appearance: actually there is a direct relationship that logically links the eclipse of rationality to the relentless hunt for exclusive or sensational news that obsesses our society.

An Italian bishop once observed: "One *true* miracle is worth two." Today we could paraphrase this saying: "One *true* piece of information is worth two." The Lin Biao affair well illustrated this point: one of the main reasons why, 11 years ago, public opinion in the West swallowed so easily the preposterous tales hastily and crudely concocted by the Chinese propaganda is simply that, in the absence of any true information, even palpably false information will always appear as the next best thing.

Chen Yi, an influential member of the old Communist ruling clique, who knew what he was talking about, declared a few years before Lin Biao's mysterious downfall: "Comrade Lin Biao is a truly great man; among all of us, *he is the only one who never opposed Chairman Mao.*" At that time, this statement was absolutely accurate; and one would have thought that it could eventually have served as Lin's epitaph.

Lin Biao was a shadowy, frail and colorless figure who made himself remarkable for two things: (1) an unconditional, absolute, and unwavering devotion to Mao Zedong; (2) a military genius that has often been compared by independent scholars to Napoleon's (actually some of his battles have become models for study in military academies).

The official slogan that emerged during the "Cultural Revolution," "Comrade Lin Biao is Chairman Mao's closest comrade-in-arms," was somewhat simplistic yet essentially accurate. The fact is that without Lin Biao it would have been impossible for Mao ever to launch his "Cultural Revolution." In order to appreciate this point, one must go back in time, to the 1959 Lushan Conference.[1]

This momentous conference had been convoked as an attempt to sort out the chaos created by the catastrophic failure of Mao's "Great Leap Forward." As a result of the delirious policies of the Leap (for which Mao was solely responsible), famine was looming in the countryside—it was to claim *millions* of lives over the next three years—and the Chinese economy lay in ruins. Mao, whose leadership had till then never been challenged, found himself suddenly confronted with a mutiny in the highest levels of the party. The mutiny was led by a forceful and prestigious personality, Defense Minister Peng Dehuai, a military hero, immensely popular for his honesty, out-

[1] Not to be confused with the 1970 Lushan Conference (second plenary session of the Ninth Central Committee) which was to mark for Lin Biao the beginning of the end. It was there for the first time that Mao rebuked him publicly.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spokenness, frugal life-style, and down-to-earth common sense. On the basis of thorough investigations that he had carried out in the countryside, at the grass-roots level, witnessing the distress of the hard-pressed peasants, Peng denounced Mao's "petit-bourgeois hotheadedness," his megalomania, his egocentrism, subjectivist idealism, and increasing divorce from reality.

As a majority of Central Committee members were gathering around Peng's banner, a third protagonist took advantage of this conflict to reap all the benefit for himself: Liu Shaoqi. Liu suggested that such an open fight would be utterly harmful to the authority of the Communist leadership. For the sake of order and national unity, it would be essential to preserve intact the prestige of Mao, at least in a symbolic fashion. Mao should thus be spared any public setback and, to this end, Peng would be formally reprimanded and demoted from his official post. However, for Mao, the price to pay for this face-saving solution would be heavy: he would have to relinquish in fact his actual power into the hands of Liu Shaoqi (who subsequently became the head of state) and Deng Xiaoping (secretary of the party).

As a result of the 1959 Lushan Conference, Mao was effectively "kicked upstairs" or, as the Chinese say, laid to rest on a sidetrack. In his largely ceremonial capacity as chairman of the party, he could still deliver occasional speeches and address the nation, but he talked in a complete vacuum. The actual decision-making and implementation of policies were now entirely under the control of Liu and Deng. Yet Mao did not lose everything at Lushan: he obtained the replacement of Peng Dehuai by a man of his own choice, Lin Biao. At the time, the designation of Lin Biao as new defense minister did not raise any objection among the leaders: appreciated for his military competence, this otherwise dull and shy character, utterly devoid of eloquence and charisma, was not likely to attract attention or stir controversy. Actually Mao had, by means of this appointment, put in place the fundamental stepping stone that would eventually enable him to return to power; with Lin Biao in this key position, Mao was like a chess master who, by the early move of one inconspicuous pawn, ensures his final victory.

For Mao, the years that followed Lushan were a crossing of the desert. The repeated attempts that he made to regain his lost power were successively foiled with ease by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who kept a tight hold over the everyday operations of the party. At last, in 1965, using a far-fetched "cultural" pretext, proceeding by the circuitous way of Shanghai, Mao finally escaped their vigilance and managed to light the fuse that would lead to that huge explosion, the "Cultural Revolution," a year later. Liu and Deng were at first quite confident that they would once more be able to regain control and manipulate this potentially dangerous new movement, keeping it under their own close supervision. Indeed, in Peking, the Central Committee immediately entrusted a group of their henchmen with the entire organization and management of the Cultural Revolution, and officially approved the group's first report of activity in February 1966. (This activity had in fact consisted essentially of neutralizing and defusing the revolutionary potential of the "Cultural Revolution"!) It was at this precise juncture that Lin Biao entered on stage and completely reversed the situation in Mao's favor.

Using the troops that for the last six years he had been readying for this particular political mission, he launched a military coup that secured for the Maoist camp full and direct control of the Peking Military Region. Under their guns, the Central Committee was reconvened, and dutifully *denounced in May the very report it had just approved two months earlier*! Now Mao's "Cultural Revolution" was well and truly launched: no one would be able to put the fire out before the entire party had been blown to smithereens. The whole country would be laid waste, millions of people would die—but what would it matter? Amid all this terror, madness, blood and devastation, Mao would find his way to victory. The ruin of China was a small price to pay if, in the end, this savage chaos could enable him to destroy his rivals and to recover the power that they had forced him to relinquish in 1959.

First, the Red Guards were unleashed against Mao's political enemies, who were thus



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flushed out of their shelters, hunted down, lynched and murdered. After this operation, the army stepped in to restore discipline and to replace the party, which had been completely wrecked in the turmoil. The troops of Lin Biao brought the Red Guards back to heel (in some places they simply massacred them) and imposed a new, rigid order all over China. Mao's full victory was celebrated at the Ninth Party Congress of 1969. There was, however, one shadow on his triumph: the Congress, marking the establishment of a purified Maoist party, turned in fact into a personal apotheosis of Lin Biao. Lin was solemnly anointed as the new heir-designate. From now on, the future belonged entirely to the man whose armies were running the whole country.

Two years later—in September 1971—Lin Biao suddenly disappeared!

After an awkward silence, Peking produced, in bits and pieces, an incredible story. According to this official version, Lin Biao had organized what appeared to be—from the documents released by the official propaganda organs—a grotesquely incompetent plot to assassinate Mao and to seize power. He failed in his attempt; in a state of total panic, he allegedly tried to escape to the Soviet Union. On the way, for obscure causes, his plane crashed in Mongolia; he was killed in the crash, thus meeting a just reward for his cowardice and treachery.

Needless to say, there were loopholes enough in this bizarre tale to let an entire herd of mammoths gallop through. At the time of his alleged conspiracy, Lin Biao was the most powerful man in China. Why should he plot to seize the power that he practically possessed already? His position as Mao's heir-designate had just been enshrined in the Constitution; he merely had to wait a few more years for the old man to die, and he could have enjoyed the full array of imperial paraphernalia. He could have waited in complete security, since he had supreme authority over the guns—out of the barrel of which, as Mao rightly observed, comes all political power. Even if we suppose that, in a sudden wish to advance the clock, he indeed actually conspired against Mao (whom he had served with such unfailing loyalty during his entire career!), it is even harder to understand why his coup d'état should not have succeeded.

How could his unique combination of superior tactical genius with massive military might and unlimited political resources come to such a lamentable end, even before one single move was made or one single shot fired? How could a conspiracy masterminded by such a man, from such a vantage point, simply burst like a soap bubble, without producing the slightest commotion, without leaving the faintest scar? Even ending in failure, a coup really organized by Lin Biao would have rocked the entire country, if not started a civil war.

As a military commander, Lin Biao was legendary for his cold, cautious, and calculating mind; his constant rule was never to go into battle if not 100 percent sure of victory. And now, for the most decisive move of his entire life, how could he have failed to draw contingency plans to deal with unexpected hitches? Several Military Regions were under the command of his closest followers; he could easily have turned Guangzhou into an impregnable fortress. Why should he have fled to a remote and hostile Soviet Union (which, of late, he had so forcefully opposed in public)? Why did he not try to take refuge in southern China, among his own loyal troops?

The Peking propaganda organs subsequently released various "documents" purporting to substantiate Lin Biao's crimes. First came the "571 Outline" (draft plan for an armed uprising). We can easily grant that Lin Biao had no moral qualms whatsoever (after all he had been a practicing Communist all his life!). But in order to believe that he was the author of this ludicrous document, whose intellectual level would barely fit the requirements of a Boy Scouts' game on a Sunday outing, we would have to deny him not only the intelligence that even his enemies credited him with but also basic common sense. Later on, doctored photographs of his body and his wife's, allegedly taken in the wreck of their plane, hardly improved the credibility of the official Peking version: bodies incinerated in the crash of a jet aircraft seldom preserve such easily recognizable features; moreover, Outer Mongolia is,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for all practical purposes, Soviet military territory. The border region where the plane crashed is precisely one of the sensitive areas where, for years, the Soviets have been emplacing their military machine against China. For Chinese officials to go there and freely take photos would be about as likely as you or I taking an after-dinner stroll on the moon.[2]

The fumbling and awkward lies that Peking was hastily proffering in guise of an explanation merely made it more obvious that the entire case was rigged. The Lin Biao affair, as presented by the Maoist sources, was nothing but a smokescreen that ill concealed an even more shocking and gruesome reality: *Lin Biao had been assassinated, in China, on Mao's order.*

Having outlived his usefulness, Lin had become too successful and too powerful for the chairman's taste. This assassination, coming a few years after the equally ruthless elimination of Mao's previous heir-designate, Liu Shaoqi, was merely fulfilling a set pattern: Mao had used the Red Guards to destroy Liu, then used Lin Biao to destroy the Red Guards; now, with the smooth and efficient assistance of Zhou Enlai, he had dispatched Lin Biao. As for Zhou Enlai himself, a similar fate was prepared for him a few years later. It did not reach full completion only because Zhou was lucky enough to have a cancer that eventually developed faster than the chairman's schemes.

The assassination of Lin Biao threw his son —a useless playboy—into a panic; with a few of his own cronies, he attempted to fly away from China (he was himself an Air Force officer) and crashed in Mongolia. Earlier on, it is quite possible that the son might have drafted the absurd and puerile "571 Outline": he was reckless and harebrained enough to have conceived such a project. As it was imperative for Mao's prestige that his latest crime be kept secret, the propaganda organs simply lent to Lin the absurd cogitations and unsuccessful escape of his son. In practice, this substitution trick proved to be of limited use. For the Chinese public, it made very little difference whether Chairman Mao had successfully murdered Vice-Chairman Lin, or Vice-Chairman Lin had unsuccessfully tried to murder Chairman Mao. Whatever little moral credit and prestige the Chinese Communist party had still managed to salvage from the successive crises of the last quarter of a century, and specially after the murderous madness of the "Cultural Revolution," was, finally, unable to survive this last blow.

The manuscript of this book landed on my desk two weeks ago. I do not know its author. The publishers could only tell me that he is a Chinese whom they have good reason to trust; he had access to exclusive, secret information, and needs to retain complete anonymity.

Not knowing the author, and not being able to check his sources, I can of course draw no conclusions regarding the historical accuracy of his narrative. Moreover, I do not know what the author's motivations are. Is he merely trying to serve the historical truth? What other interests may be furthered by this publication? Is it a pure coincidence that this manuscript—which exposes the deviousness of Mao and shows that Lin's conspiracy presented at least an element of self-defense—reached Western publishers *precisely* at the time when, in Peking, the leading military personalities who had been condemned to heavy sentences for their participation in the Lin Biao conspiracy were suddenly released, barely one year after having been sentenced? (They were freed allegedly because of old age and ill health. No follower of the Maoist gang convicted during the same trial benefited from such leniency!) It should also be noted that the Soviet Union, which had kept quiet on this whole affair, suddenly began to leak reports a few weeks ago reminding us that, indeed, Lin Biao was not in the Trident that had crashed in Mongolia. Who is helping whom, and for what purpose?

Keeping all these reservations and unan-

[2] As I pointed out in my book *Chinese Shadows* (New York: Viking, 1977, p. 180), the Russians, with direct access to the site of the crash, have known all along that *Lin Biao was not on the plane*. Earlier in his career, Lin had undergone lengthy medical treatment in the Soviet Union; the Russians had enough medical information to identify his body with certainty, had he been among the passengers on the wrecked Trident. At the time, they made no secret of this fact, but neither did they give it special publicity, not knowing which version of the episode could best serve their own interests.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swered questions in mind, I read this book with fascinated interest. Its narrative tallies with all available evidence. It confirms the basic contention of all serious China observers that Lin Biao was assassinated in China, on Mao's initiative. It provides a wealth of new elements and illuminating details. I confess I would personally question some aspects of these new revelations (I still find it difficult to believe that Lin actively conspired against Mao; if such a conspiracy ever existed, it must have been a last-minute desperate attempt, when Lin realized that he was already cornered). But I cannot disprove them, nor prove my point.[3] And I must admit that, on the whole, the picture presented in Yao Ming-le's account is plausible and coherent—although all the implications it may present for Sino-Soviet relations should be received with the greatest critical caution. In particular, the contention that the armed clashes between the two countries could be merely ascribed to the private schemes of one ambitious individual seems a crude simplification, to say the least.

Needless to say, these pages will appear most unsettling to a great many readers. Western audiences have been particularly ill-prepared to confront the gruesome realities of the power struggle that rages permanently within the Communist ruling clique. At every turn of this ferocious fight, coups, countercoups, purges, plots, and assassinations have been studiously ignored by our leading political analysts: "No, no!" they assured us each time, "Chinese politics do not work this way," there are no power struggles in China, only "some policy problems on which honest revolutionaries disagree." China Experts are fortunate indeed: the public never extends to them the elementary standards of professional competence that are normally expected from modest mechanics and plumbers. We dismiss the technicians who fail to mend our cars or our leaky bathroom faucets, but whenever the political reality belies the analyses of the Experts, we dismiss the reality.

This temptation to dismiss the reality should be particularly strong in this case, as sensitive souls may find that the light that the Lin Biao affair sheds on the nature and the workings of the Chinese Communist leadership is unbearably crude. To say that the party leaders behave like gangsters would be a gratuitous slur on the latter's reputation: after all, even in the underworld some kind of twisted morality is still being cultivated, some principles are still respected, a certain concept of loyalty within the gang is still valued. In this respect, the Lin Biao affair will remain a landmark in the history of the party: with it, the moral bankruptcy of the regime was totally exposed to the public, and as a result, the cynicism and political demobilization of the Chinese populace reached a point of no return.

If the sinister political milieu described in this book will without doubt shock and scandalize many Westerners, for any Chinese reader these pages evoke a reality that is all too grimly familiar. The psychology, the behavior, and the life-style of the ruling elite are here faithfully portrayed. The sociological accuracy of this narrative is thus beyond question. Yet, is this account factually true? At least it makes sense —which is more than could be said for the official Peking version of the Lin Biao affair. □

[3] If Lin had really organized a conspiracy, how shall we explain the fact that, after he had been killed and his conspiracy had been exposed (September 12), his co-conspirators were still active on the national stage several days later. Qiu Huizuo, for instance, made a public appearance *on September 24* at Peking airport where he went, together with Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying, to bid farewell to a Chinese economic delegation leaving for Hanoi.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harold R. Isaacs

# Re-encounters in China

## Notes of a Journey in a Time Capsule

*In the fall of 1980, Harold Isaacs was unexpectedly invited by the Chinese Writers Association to revisit China and meet some old friends, some of whom he had not seen since the 1940s in wartime Chungking, some not since the early 1930s when he knew them as young Communists in Shanghai and Peking. The following are two excerpts from his report of this experience, which he calls "Re-encounters in China: Notes of a Journey in a Time Capsule."* — EDS.

### 1. The Doctored Photo

A writer named Tang Tao, who came to see us in Peking, presented us with a book of his newly published essays open to a page with a photograph that he eagerly pointed out to me because I was in it. It was a picture of a group taken in the garden of Soong Ching-ling's house on a day in 1933 when George Bernard Shaw came to lunch. In the group, left to right, were Agnes Smedley, Shaw, Soong Ching-ling, myself, dark hair glinting in the sunlight, most of me covered by the figure of Tsai Yuan-pei, the liberal educator, Lin Yu-tang, at that time one of the editors of a Shanghai journal, *China Critic*, in which he wrote a column already well-known for its sardonic humor, and finally, at the far right, the small figure of Lu Hsun, with his stiff black hair, his brush of a mustache and heavy dark brows, squinting at the camera. I stared at the picture with a sudden rush of memory and feeling. I remembered the occasion well, if not this picture, and I was glad to have it as a souvenir. Just how much of a souvenir it was, I had yet to learn.

A few days later, when we left Peking for Shanghai, another double exposure took me back again nearly 50 years. As we taxied for takeoff in the Chinese airline's Boeing 707, I saw a pair of oxen pulling a plow in a field alongside the runway. It brought instantly to mind a sight like this that I put into the first sentence I wrote—in our house in Peking on a summer day in 1934—to open *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*: "On the fringes of Chinese cities, the shadows of lofty chimneys fall across fields still tilled with wooden plows." That sentence came directly from a scene that lay before Viola and me one day as we walked in the outskirts of Shanghai. The lofty chimney belonged to the Shanghai Power Company plant, the wooden plow to the farmer tilling his small plot of ground at the very edge of China's greatest metropolis. I could not see what kind of plow those oxen were pulling as we roared past, the shadow of our great jet airplane falling upon them as we went by, a scene recording the persistence of China's crippling contrasts through this half-century of our years.

As we pulled up into the gray sky, I was scribbling a note about this swift vignette. Viola took from her bag a copy of the journal *Chinese Literature* given to us the day before by a woman writer, Shen Rong, because it contained an English translation of a long story she had written. While I wrote away in my notebook, Viola read her story, then began thumbing through the rest of the magazine. She stopped suddenly at a page she came to,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sat up, thrust it at me. It was the beginning of an article about Agnes Smedley by two American admirers. Covering half the page was a photograph, the same picture of that group in Soong Ching-ling's garden, but not quite the same. Where I stood in the photo we had seen in Tang Tao's book, next to Soong Ching-ling and behind Tsai Yuan-pei, there was nothing but the dark shadow of the verandah. Next to Tsai Yuan-pei stood, not Lin Yu-tang, who had similarly disappeared, but Lu Hsun, whose small figure had been moved over to fill the space where Lin's had been. The two of us had vanished, brushed away into the limbo of nonpersonhood as totally as if the brusher had been an executioner seeing to it that we existed no longer, certainly no longer in that garden on that day nearly 50 years ago.

I stared at the picture, its impact coming hard and slow. So much had already made this a journey in a time capsule, a return to China across a gap a lifetime wide. My return from the outer world was hardly like but not wholly unlike the return of the old friends I was re-encountering just back from *their* limbos, in prisons, on labor farms, in distant places of exile, in confinement, in isolation. The welcome they gave us felt uncomfortably at times like the rehabilitation they had just experienced, old "errors" expunged, old labels removed, books put back on shelves, names restored, existence regained after all their years as nonpersons. I had been feeling at second-hand all week the sensations of their nonpersonhood. Now with a force no mere empathy could match, I could feel these sensations as my own. I had just reappeared out of the shadow of Soong Ching-ling's verandah, just as they had reappeared out of the bourns from which they and so many others had just returned. In this picture before me, my 23-year-old figure had disappeared, along with my youth, and here I was, 70 now, staring at the empty space, knowing acutely that for all who ever knew me then, including some of the friends I was re-encountering, I had simply not existed at all in the many years from that time until my return, that the person who appeared to them now, an aging man with a lifetime of other experience and work of which they knew nothing, was still only that dark-haired young man who had shared a little in the challenges and terrors they had faced in those days.

AFTER A LONG MINUTE, Viola and I began to talk about how we could get another copy of Tang Tao's book in which we had seen the original of this photograph—we had sent his book home along with others we had received—thinking that some Shanghai bookstore might have it and thus give us the means to take the matter up with our Writers Association hosts, and with the editor of this journal, none other than Mao Dun himself. But the ordained quality of so much that was present in this journey took care of this problem too. The next morning in Shanghai, our first call was at the Lu Hsun Museum where, as visitors who had been friends of the great man himself, we were received as very important guests. The entire staff was waiting at the entrance to greet us, and the director, Mrs. Yang Lan, came forward holding out to us in her hand, as a welcoming gift, a glossy print of this same photograph in its original version, my certificate not just of rehabilitation but of veritable resurrection.

In the museum the memorabilia of Lu Hsun's life were arranged in a series of exhibits showing the context of the turbulent historic events of his years, from the last decades of the Manchu Dynasty, which fell in 1911, to the onset of Japan's war on China in the 1930s. Lu Hsun, born in 1881, died in 1936. His fame rests on the works he produced as the first modern writer to produce literature in the *pai-hua*, the vernacular of common use (instead of *wen-li*, or classical Chinese) and to do so in a new medium, the modern short story. All his stories and his equally famous short critical essays, which he also developed into his own uniquely distinctive form, were aimed at breaking the crust of oppressive traditions and their modern counterparts as they appeared both in the large events and the individual lives about which he wrote.

The exhibits were arranged by the years of his life and the activities that filled them. Among those that covered the early 1930s, a number had to do with the China League for Civil Rights (of which I have written elsewhere in these notes). Lu Hsun joined Soong Ching-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ling in that bold attempt to challenge Chiang Kai-shek's regime of terror against opponents. Lin Yu-tang was one of the small number of Chinese liberals drawn to join them in this effort, attracted by their boldness, the protective cover of their prestige, and the small additional measure of protection afforded by foreign power in the International Settlement of Shanghai. When Yang Chien, a leading figure in the League, was murdered by Kuomintang assassins on a Settlement street one day in June 1933, many of these individuals, including Lin Yu-tang, shrank away, not unreasonably afraid of the consequences of daring to persist.

Newspaper clippings and magazine articles relating to all of this covered a section of a wall in the Lu Hsun Museum. Since I too had some part in this activity, my name appeared among the others in more than a few places. And there, in one of the large glass-covered panels of this exhibit, was the same photo of the group in Soong Ching-ling's garden, in its original undoctored form. That group gathered for lunch that day was in fact the executive committee of the League for Civil Rights. We hoped, vainly as it turned out, that we could get Shaw to denounce Kuomintang repression and make a worldwide propaganda score with whatever he might say about it. Unfortunately, and to our considerable chagrin, we found we never could keep the aging Shaw's attention focused long enough on the matters that interested us. But there was the picture to mark the occasion, up on this wall not because of Shaw but because Lu Hsun was in it.

As I stepped up to look more closely, I could see, however, that the Chinese caption under it was less than complete. There was a small stir of embarrassment among my hosts when I asked for it to be read out: "Smedley, Shaw, Soong Ching-ling, Tsai Yuan-pei, Lu Hsun, *and others*." My writ of rehabilitation apparently restored my face but not my name. "I see," I said, and we went on with our tour of the museum.

Outside later, when we were leaving, a photographer was waiting to memorialize our visit. He took a picture of us standing in the middle of the group of museum staff and Writers Association hosts. After it was taken, I rather formally told Mrs. Yang that I would be most pleased if I could have a copy of it and would she please write on the back of it the names of all those present. "*All* the names," I said, "with no 'and others!' " At which the entire group

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broke into a relieved and relieving guffaw of appreciative laughter.

It was not easy in the circumstances to pursue the matter of the doctored photo. We were guests, our hosts were treating us with the full measure of Chinese courtesy, and we were Chinese enough ourselves to be unable to press them with embarrassing questions. From Shanghai, I wrote to Mao Dun in Peking, since as honorary chairman of the Writers Association he was in effect our host-in-chief, as well as nominal editor of the journal in which the doctored picture appeared. I made inquiry about it, I wrote, in the spirit of Deng Hsiao-ping's injunction "to seek truth from facts," expressing the hope that the current effort of the new leadership in China to turn away from the practices of the past would include those that involve the real or symbolic destruction of persons who for one reason or another did not please those in power.

At a dinner we gave before leaving Shanghai to thank our hosts for their hospitality, I raised the matter of the doctoring of photos and texts, a familiar practice of Communist demonology in Russia where millions of bodies lie in Gulag graves but where also great masses of printed material, photographs, encyclopedia entries, histories, historic documents, and who knows what more, lie shredded or dissolved somewhere in the vast bottomlessness of the KGB's memory chutes. In China too, my guests assured me, and they recited examples, all drawn, to be sure, only from the recent era of the villainous Gang of Four. The most notorious and most hilariously recounted was a photo that showed Deng Hsiao-ping standing next to Mao Tse-tung on the wall at Tienanmen. The Gang-of-Four photo doctors had simply severed Deng's head and placed another head on his short and stocky body. More current examples were cruder still, the brush being used not to deceive but simply to exorcise the evil ones. Pictures that showed Mao's widow Chiang Ching and members of her Gang in places of power around Mao had been altered simply by removing their figures, leaving the empty places to show where they had stood once but would never, they all hoped, stand again.

Common as the practice apparently was, I continued to find it difficult to imagine why any Chinese would have felt reason enough to brush those two figures, of myself and Lin Yu-tang, from this particular picture. It is true that we both, in our very different ways, had become counterrevolutionary enemies of the peo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ple. I had done so by splitting from my Communist friends in 1934 as a dissident on the left; Lin moved in the opposite direction, eventually all the way to becoming an ardent anti-Communist supporter of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang. Still, it seemed to me that doctoring of this kind, whether in Russia or in China, would have to be applied to figures of some importance, whether factionally or otherwise. In this case, someone had been moved to blot out two individuals who had no such importance at all. I could easily have been relegated for all posterity to the category of "unidentified man"—as the caption at the museum did by merely omitting my name—and Lin too, who despite his later small vogue among some Western readers for some of his books about China could have been depended upon to slide off into obscurity. He had already done so when I saw him five years ago in Hongkong, failing from a stroke and soon to die. He was living the lonely life of an all-but-forgotten man who had himself forgotten most of what had passed earlier in his life, a pathetic mutual erasure. No, I felt a chillingly personal touch in the symbolic murders that had removed us from this picture. I could only wonder for whom this might have been important, important enough to go to the trouble of leaving only Agnes Smedley visible in that otherwise distinguished company.

However that all might be, the symbolic murder does seem to have been undone. I do not know who took me out of the picture, why, when, or where. Somebody—I do not know who, why, or how—dug up my airbrushed body and put me back into the picture. At our farewell dinner Mrs. Yang announced, amid general nodding approval around the table, that she was going to restore my name to the caption in her exhibit. Her promise kept, I would not only be back from nonexistence but—at least on the wall of the Lu Hsun Museum in Shanghai—also saved from namelessness. I obviously had to be as grateful as possible for this small favor.

**Postscript** • Mao Dun's answer to our letter arrived a few weeks after our return home. The journal, he said, had obtained the doctored photo from the files of the Hsin Hua News Agency, which had taken it from an album about Lu Hsun published in 1976, a time, he went on, "when many abnormal practices prevailed," a reference to the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution. He had advised the news agency, he said, "to take measures against the recurrence of such incidents."

Other inquiries produced some bits of additional information. In its doctored form, this photo has apparently been around for many years. A copy of it turned up as an illustration only a year or so ago in a new edition of an old book by John Fairbank. Inquiry to the publishers produced the information that it had been obtained from an agency in New York called Eastfoto, which appears to be an agency for Soviet photos.

In China, I was informed, the photo hung for a long time among the exhibits at the Lu Hsun Museum in Peking, and possibly also in Shanghai. It was used as one in the packet of postcards sold as Lu Hsun mementoes in both places. I received a copy of that postcard, showing the picture with only five figures, but oddly, in the caption on its back, listing—like the caption I saw in Shanghai—the five names and adding "and others." By some action by someone, unknown to me, the original, with all seven figures in it, began to reappear in 1979, turning up not only at the Lu Hsun Museum but also in a number of newly published books, like Tang Tao's essays and a new biography of Tsai Yuan-pei.

I have tried in letters to learn more of how this came about, but all my inquiries have been turned away with polite non-replies. I reappeared by name as well as by face when this photograph in its original undoctored form appeared among many others in connection with special articles and supplements about Soong Ching-ling after her death in May 1981, as in the *Beijing Review* (June 8, 1981) and *China Reconstructs* (September 1981) and others, all with full captions including "American journalist Harold Isaacs" and "modern prose writer Lin Yu-tang." With Soong Ching-ling gone, I became the only one in that picture still alive, left alone to record the sensations of this experience of symbolic death and resurrection.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## 2. Chen Yi

How did Communist survivors of these hard times in Communist China deal with becoming victims of their own illusions, losing their best years not to any outside foe but to comrades of their own party acting in the name of their Great Leader, Mao Tse-tung himself? In the various answers I got to this question, I heard the mingled accents of the stoic, the philosopher, the cynical or cautious survivor and—in varying intensities—the true believer. Of the latter, the most striking example was supplied by Chen Yi, poet, playwright, onetime head of the Cultural Department of the Liberation Army with the rank of general (not to be confused with the military leader Marshal Chen Yi!). Back after 21 years in limbo, Chen Yi was now vice-secretary of the Party Secretariat in Shanghai.

Chen Yi was not someone I knew in the early 1930s but someone who knew me or of me because he was a reader of the *China Forum*. When he heard I was in Shanghai, he asked to see me. He appeared at the appointed time, thin gray hair, large staring eyes, gold teeth gleaming in a ravaged face, 68, he said he was, but older looking than that, wearing a well-pressed brown coat with leather edging and blue trousers. He came in, hand outstretched, with a broad smile of greeting, and plunged right into telling me how as a young Communist of 20 in Peking he read the *Forum*, "published in those most difficult years, the darkest age of the Chinese Revolution." In May 1933 he was arrested and sent to prison in Nanking. He was released in 1936 and made his way to the northwest where he joined Mao's Eighth Route Army and began his career as a cultural worker in the military establishment. He served through the Japanese war, the civil war, and into the years following the Communist victory in 1949. Those were the good years, he said, much good literature written, many good films made. Those were also the years of the heavy struggles in the bureaucratic machinery that ruled all that was called "culture" in China, shaping it with a heavy political hand from the beginning.

Chen Yi was part of the system until March 1958 when the heavy hand landed on him. Along with many others guilty of being writers and intellectuals, he was denounced and expelled as a "Rightist" and sent off, like Ding Ling, to Heilungkiang in northern Manchuria. There he remained for 21 years, most of them spent in farm labor camps, three of them in prison. His wife, exiled with him, was also imprisoned with him.

"When we were in prison together," said Chen Yi, "I wrote a poem: 'We two in our places/Twelve meters between us/But one thousand mountains apart.' " They could not see each other, only once in a while "we could hear each other's voice." Their children suffered for their father's sins. "My eldest was labeled 'counterrevolutionary' and sent to the countryside for eight years. My youngest daughter was in Harbin with us and simply had to shift for herself when we were in prison."

"Yes, those were difficult days and years," Chen Yi said, "hard to bear. I knew revolution was difficult, incomparably difficult. I felt strong enough to face any difficulties. But I would lie awake in the night and ask myself: what crime did I commit to get such harsh punishment? It was hard to bear, hard. But still, I lived through it.

"You can well ask how I got through all this. I had three things: I had the will to live. I was determined that no matter how people maltreated me, I would not maltreat myself. And finally I knew that as long as the Chinese Communist party persisted in seeking the real 100-percent Marxist party line, there could always be hope."

"100-percent Marxist party line?" I asked in wonder.

"Yes. I am a 50-year party member, well-educated by the party. I have strong convictions. As long as the party continued to seek the true 100-percent Marxist party line, there could be hope. I believed this."

"But Chen Yi," I said almost pleadingly. "There are a thousand 100-percent Marxist lines! The people who did all this to you, expelled you, sent you to labor camps, put you in prison, persecuted your children—they were *all* following a '100-percent Marxist party line'! How can you say this?"

We were not alone. Local officials of the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writers Association were sitting by listening, one of them serving as interpreter. Chen Yi stared at me, his large eyes glassy, reflecting the gray light from the window. He leaned forward and said urgently: "I see you don't believe . . . ." He held out his hand. "I ask you, I ask you, *believe* me! "

I stared back at him and then I made a small speech of my own. You have all been through your experience here, I said, but this has not been your experience alone. Our whole generation everywhere went through it in different ways, dreaming the great socialist dream, then having it crushed, by Stalin and his murderous regime in Russia and now again here in China. We were left to find some better way to human betterment, something better than prisons and labor camps and killings and oppression worse than before, and we haven't been very successful. I had to struggle to keep my voice down, my feelings in check. This man before me and others I had met had gone through their hells, had their lives ruined, and insisted that they remained true believers in a "100-percent Marxist party line." It was preposterous and if it were truly so, crushing. If I were to take Chen Yi at his word, I would have to see him and his fellows as Christian martyrs, appealing to a nonbeliever waiting with them to go out to the lions. "Your return to life was purely accidental," I said. "If the Gang of Four had moved faster and grabbed power in time, what then?" "Why then," came the reply, "we wouldn't be sitting here talking! " Everyone laughed. No one responded to what I had said.

When I asked Chen Yi how he had been extricated from his plight, he told a familiar story, again a matter of personal connections. He had been first labeled "Rightist" and then, when the Cultural Revolution began, he was charged with betraying the party from the beginning, from the time he was arrested in 1933. He had no trial or hearing but was released from prison in 1976 when the Cultural Revolution came to an end and the uneasy interregnum in Peking began. Chen Yi remained "under control" in Harbin for two years longer. When Deng Hsiao-ping finally put down the Gang of Four and took power into his hands, one of his chief aides was a somewhat younger party veteran, Hu Yao-bang, who became general secretary of the party. Hu Yao-bang, it so happened, was an old comrade of Chen Yi. Papers on his case moved swiftly then and his release was signed by Deng Hsiao-ping himself. By October 1978, Chen Yi was fully rehabilitated—all charges erased, his party membership restored and his rank as general, together with all his old salary and perquisites.

"Yes," continued Chen Yi, "if the Gang of Four had been successful, all would have suffered, but that is all gone now." And he was sure, he said, it could not happen again. "Given our present leadership and line," he said firmly, "we believe there is little chance of any such thing being repeated. The Central Committee has had many conferences. There have been many documents. All are centered on this problem, all searching for the right conclusion. It is still to be made, still to come. We are now experimenting, trying to do our best. That's what we are doing, what we have to do, to educate the young to have faith in the party. We are in charge of youth education. We have to teach our sons and daughters to learn Marxist teachings, to distinguish the bad from the good."

I asked Chen Yi if he was writing his story. He avoided a direct answer. He displayed the now-familiar caution. The lesson of all this was that you could never be sure how what you wrote today would look tomorrow, and who would be there to do the looking. I quoted to Chen Yi those lines written by William Morris more than a hundred years ago: "Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes it turns out to be not what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name." He responded with his glassy smile. "As a party member for 50 years," he said, "despite everything, I believe the present line of the leadership of the Central Committee is right! " And then he left.

One of those who had been in the room through the long afternoon of these exchanges came over to me and said: "I see you were wondering about their despair. They *do* feel despair. But they cannot let it come out." □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ulf Himmelstrand

# Sweden: Toward Economic Democracy

## A Social Democratic Government Contemplates New Policies

In the Swedish general elections of 1976 the ruling Social Democrats were defeated after 44 years in government. In that election campaign the electorate was concerned with two important new issues that had never before been on the agenda: first, nuclear power, and second, a plan for wage-earners' funds, which would give labor progressively more and more power over investments and the use of capital in general.

Nuclear power surely was not an entirely new issue; by '76 Sweden had more nuclear power per capita than any other country. But new in this regard was the Center party—the renamed version of the old Agrarian party—and its decision to withdraw its earlier support from the Swedish Nuclear Power Program. Well aware that the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture was rapidly shrinking, the old Agrarian party had decided to revamp, in order to penetrate urban localities—taking the new name, and endorsing various populist and environmentalist issues, such as the abolition of nuclear power. And so the new Center party had decided—alone among the larger and more respected parties—to reject nuclear power completely. Only the small Communist party, typically Eurocommunist but untypically concerned with ecological issues, also took this antinuclear stand.

The Center party won a great victory in the 1976 elections. About 55 percent of those who withdrew their support from the Social Democrats voted for the Center party—swayed, it seems, by the issue of nuclear power. And so Center's Thorbjörn Fälldin, a sheep farmer from the north, a shrewd politician and probably sincere in his concern with the dangers of nuclear power, became Sweden's prime minister.

In that '76 election wage-earners' funds—although a new campaign issue and a popular punching bag for the nonsocialist parties—did not count as much as the issue of nuclear power. It had been introduced by the trade union movement, but the Social Democrats refused to discuss it in the campaign, and this defensive evasion may well have contributed to their defeat.

Now, after six years in opposition—a period that saw four different bourgeois governments in office—the Social Democrats are back in power. They won a convincing victory in the 1982 elections, despite the multimillion-dollar campaign mounted against them by the Swedish Employers Confederation (SAF)—a campaign mainly directed against the wage-earners' funds. About 45.9 percent of Sweden's electorate voted for the Social Democrats; and so, with the 5.6 percent polled by the Communists, the Social Democrats have a sound parliamentary majority in virtually all important matters.

This electoral victory cannot simply mean a return to the good old Social Democratic policies of stimulating capitalist economic growth and redistributing a generous slice of the output through taxation and egalitarian welfare measures. Indeed, there are indications that Sweden's Social Democrats are taking important steps in new directions. And they must do so in order to prove that they are the party capable of solving the problems that now confront every "welfare-cum-capitalist" society.

Nuclear power no longer is the key issue. One of the previous bourgeois governments, incapable of resolving the issue in regular parliamentary ways, put the question before the Swedish people in a consultative referendum. This resulted in the decision by a parliamen-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tary majority that included the Social Democrats to phase out nuclear power over a 25-year period, while encouraging the development of alternative, renewable sources of energy.

These now are the two key issues, and they are closely related: how to "expand" Sweden out of a crisis that is becoming global, at a time when the French Socialists under Mitterrand have failed in their "expansionist" attempts; and how to introduce wage-earners' funds. Although the wage-earners' funds proposed jointly by the party and the trade unions now have been attracting less attention than other matters, the total new Social Democratic approach cannot be understood without a consideration of these funds. They are a structural "key" to the party's plans for economic expansion and innovation.

In the final television debate between the major party leaders two days before the September '82 election, Kjell-Olof Feldt, now our minister of finance, gave much more time to other matters than to the issue of wage-earners' funds, although both he and Olof Palme were hard-pressed on this point by their bourgeois opponents' allegations that the introduction of such funds would amount to dictatorship, Soviet-style. What Feldt said on this matter was clear and succinct:

> Here are two cases from Swedish reality. In Österby, a community in northern Uppland, there is a steel factory. That factory determines employment, income, and the future for the inhabitants of Österby. Now there is a threat to discontinue production or move the factory elsewhere. The decision will be taken by the owner of the factory, Jan Stenbeck. Mr Stenbeck lives in New York. The inhabitants of Österby have never met Mr. Stenbeck and will never meet him, much less talk to him.
>
> In Högsjö, in the province of Sörmland, there is a well-managed family firm that for many years has provided employment and income to the inhabitants. But a big investment company, Skrinet, has bought a big chunk of shares in the firm. And now the community of Högsjö with its factory, its houses, its sports field, and its school is being transformed into a so-called profit unit among many other such units of that shareholding concern located in Stockholm. What the Stockholm headquarters decide about the Högsjö factory, with its capital and its employees, couldn't be more difficult to influence for the inhabitants of Högsjö if they were living on the moon.
>
> Österby and Högsjö are not unique cases. On the contrary, an ever growing number of firms in Sweden are governed by forces far away from the toil and the everyday problems of the work place—by investment companies, holding companies, big banks, and private funds. The joy of producing something worthwhile and of watching people in useful and creative work is not one of their prime incentives. To them factories and work places are only figures in ledgers, shares that can be sold for profit.
>
> We consider this development to be detrimental for our country. We want to see capital create new assets, and to provide employment and income for the citizens. This is what we are aiming at with our proposal on wage-earners' funds. By accumulating money in funds that we all own and jointly control, we can make capital more productive. . . . The bourgeois parties and the Employers' Confederation have waged a violent campaign against wage-earners' funds. They say that such funds bring about a concentration of power, and that they threaten our democracy. So, if one director rules over many workers, that is democracy; but if many workers rule over one director, that is dictatorship. . . .

The closing words of this long quotation make it abundantly clear that our present minister of finance is certainly not neglecting the issue of power in dealing with the question of wage-earners' funds. But he is equally concerned with the question of capital accumulation and the use of capital. Critics from the left have alleged that wage-earners' funds, as conceived by the Social Democratic party, are nothing but a new way of furnishing the same old capitalists with the financial capital they need, disregarding the power of private and corporate capital. I think these critics are wrong, and I base my opinion not only on this statement by Kjell-Olof Feldt but also on interviews with other leading Social Democrats, and on my knowledge of how the Social Democratic party in the past has managed to pursue crucial and controversial proposals.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Obviously, the question of wage-earners' funds is controversial, even among Social Democrats. Public opinion polls, as publicized in the press toward the end of the 1982 election campaign, showed a diminishing number of Social Democrats voicing a definite yes on the question of wage-earners' funds, an unusually large number of undecided and don't-know replies, and a slight majority of negative over positive opinions. Still, the Social Democrats won the election with a somewhat larger margin than usual. They won despite the most costly advertising and mass-media campaign ever launched in Sweden against a political proposal. Perhaps the media's utter saturation with negative messages about wage-earners' funds for a whole year has had a reverse effect: surfeit and, finally, boredom.

Voters, bored with the campaign and increasingly disenchanted with the performance of bourgeois governments since 1979, but also somewhat suspicious about wage-earners' funds, found it easier to vote Social Democratic in 1982 than in '76 because they were paying far more attention to such other issues as unemployment, inflation, and industrial stagnation. Public opinion polls conducted after the election support this interpretation. Yet when comparing several national sample surveys (most of them never publicized in this connection because made for other purposes), one might also say that popular opinion on wage-earners' funds was unusually sensitive to the precise phrasing of the survey questions. According to how the questions were formulated, unfavorable responses on wage-earners' funds varied from 20 to 70 percent.

Although the new Social Democratic government may indeed not have to pursue its intention of creating wage-earners' funds against the will of a well-entrenched public majority, as the Swedish Employers' Confederation claims is the case, it certainly cannot count on active and well-informed popular support for its path-breaking proposal. But this is not an unfamiliar problem for the Social Democrats. The situation was very similar 25 years ago, when a Social Democratic government legislated a general pension scheme, which then was portrayed as the imminent threat of "repressive socialism." Public and parliamentary support was weak at the time; yet only a few years later, public opinion polls showed overwhelming support for the scheme. Politicians who once fought that pension scheme, calling it a sinister instance of "creeping socialism," now, in the early 1980s, have come around to proposing expansion of the general pension scheme—calling it a better solution to the problems of democratically controlled accumulation and use of capital than the wage-earners' funds!

Political campaigners use words, and public opinion pollsters are interested in how people respond to words with words. There are others who speak with money, and respond with money. The Swedish Stock Exchange started showing positive signs even before the 1982 election, at a time when predictions of a Social Democratic election victory were becoming strong. The Stock Exchange indeed continued its positive behavior *after* the Social Democrats' election victory—despite the impending threat of wage-earners' funds! It seems that part of the business community was more impressed by the 16 percent devaluation of the Swedish crown—the new government's first crucial decision—than they had been by the election campaign of the Swedish Employers' Confederation.

Even if the Social Democratic leadership is right in expecting growing support for wage-earners' funds in the near future, it will require time as well as tactical, strategic, and educational skills to implement a system of wage-earners' funds that will realize its promise. Meanwhile, the Social Democratic government will get the ball rolling.

- First, there will be a new round of collective bargaining sessions between labor and capital. The two main trade union organizations, LO (the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions) and TCO (the Central Organization of Salaried Employees) have promised both wage restraint and not to request compensation for the effects of the devaluation. The trade unions' self-discipline in periods of Social Democratic rule is a well-known phenomenon in Sweden; but this time such restraint will be conditional. Only if provisional wage-earners' funds, in the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

form of collective profit-sharing with unions, are introduced in companies that have profited greatly from the devaluation can we expect a calm and restrained round of bargaining in 1983. But since it is unlikely that such a system of collective profit-sharing will emerge in the bargaining process itself, it will have to be introduced through legislation initiated by the Social Democratic government. This we can expect sometime in 1983. Later on, a government commission that now is looking into some technical details of profit-sharing schemes will submit its proposals. By the summer, we may expect the launching of a government bill on this matter—the first stage in what will turn out to be much like a multistage rocket: the building of a system of wage-earners' funds through collective profit-sharing.

• A second stage will begin with the work of another government commission that is to consider the criteria of rational allocation of financial capital accumulating in wage-earners' funds. On the one hand, it has been made abundantly clear by several spokesmen of the Social Democratic party that—in principle—no money from wage-earners' funds should go to aid ailing companies no longer able to produce profits. On the other hand, it is clear that unions, workers, and local party organizations in such places as Österby and Högsjö are expecting help from wage-earners' funds. The firms in Österby and Högsjö were profitable and well-managed but systematically deprived of direct influence over their investments, simply because some investment company or absentee director wanted to "rationalize" and get rid of the firm to place money elsewhere, without considering the cost of capital destruction and the social cost of abandoning a whole community.

Per-Olof Edin, a trade union economist now working in the Ministry of Finance, and Anna Hedborg, another trade union economist who assisted in writing the first proposal for wage-earners' funds, have formulated the criteria for allocation in the following rather abstract but quite illuminating way. While maximum profitability is the main criterion in private capitalist enterprises, with the demands of labor and society acting as constraints on efforts to achieve maximum profitability—it is exactly the other way around for wage-earners' funds. Profitability is necessary but is merely a constraint upon the effort to produce what labor and society demand. Put another way, labor and society are obligated to produce commodities and services at reasonable prices, but to do so in a decent working environment, with stable and preferably growing employment, giving full consideration to ecological and social costs. With such criteria it is less likely that an enterprise will be left to deteriorate because of withdrawal of investment simply because profits can be made more "rationally" elsewhere. And surely from the workers' point of view profit should be earned and taken where the work is being done.

Conventional economic wisdom, of course, will view such criteria for the allocation of capital with alarm. By definition, unrestrained mobility of financial capital in response to market forces produces an "optimal" allocation of resources. According to this common approach no proof is necessary and the multidimensional nature of "utility" can be disregarded. Edin and Hedborg question this economic wisdom in a fascinating little book whose title—*The New Challenge*—tells us a lot about the attitude of the Swedish labor movement right now. Edin and Hedborg, however, are not rejecting the role of market forces, which Edin has described as "indispensable." They assert that collective labor, with its social repertory of incentives, will respond differently to market conditions than private capital, but certainly not less rationally. Labor's rationality will be more multidimensional. By considering a wider scope of incentives and interests in deciding on allocation of resources, fewer negative environmental and social side effects should be generated. And so the social costs of ameliorating the damage of such side effects can be reduced.

Whether the government commission already appointed to look into the principles of allocating financial capital from wage-earners' funds actually will argue as here outlined remains to be seen. From what I know of the debate about these matters within the Swedish labor movement, I expect the argument to run along these lines.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• The third stage of this "multistage rocket" toward the future concerns the building of "economic democracy." The first stage (capital accumulation through collective profit-sharing in provisional wage-earners' funds) and the second stage (exploring the criteria for allocating wage-earners' capital) concentrate on questions of accumulation and the use of wage-earners' capital as a supplement to the private capitalism that still is dominant in Sweden. Certainly, private capitalism will not be dethroned as a result of the launching of these two stages; but it will have to put up with a somewhat different distribution of power over investment decisions. To simplify matters during these first two stages, a well-known and by now generally accepted decision-making apparatus will be utilized to allocate wage-earners' capital until a more satisfactory formula has been found—namely, the apparatus of the General Pension Funds.

But why could not these General Pension Funds be entrusted with the necessary allocation decisions on a permanent basis? A discussion about this fundamental political question has been going on within the movement for many years. It is not yet resolved. The discussion will continue, and sooner or later a third government commission may be appointed to explore ways of "democratizing" the system of wage-earners' funds in other ways than by linking them with the General Pension Funds —a tie that by then will be reality.

In an interview I had with Per-Olov Edin at the Ministry of Finance in December '82, he clarified his point of view. He suggests that the boards of wage-earners' funds, probably one in each region, should neither get involved in decisions on general economic policy and structural changes nor in investment decisions that should be made at the level of each firm. The only decision that will be assigned to the boards of wage-earners' funds, just as in financial banks, is how to place capital. Naturally, this may influence the conditions that determine whether or not investments are made in certain firms. But decisions on such matters are and should also be influenced by conditions unique to each firm and should therefore also be made at that level.

Democratization of the economy therefore will not imply some kind of centralized governance by democratically elected national and regional political bodies, or by a democratically appointed board of some General Pension Fund. Economic democracy must be a multilevel structure. Investment decisions, and other decisions concerning a given firm, should be made in a decentralized manner *within* the firm; through the introduction of wage-earners' funds, such decisions will increasingly involve the employees in the firm and their organizations. Formally speaking, this could be accomplished when employees in a given firm are delegated with authority by the regional wage-earners' fund that has bought shares in that firm. The employees will thus be able to participate in electing the managing director and the company board.

The board of a regional wage-earners' fund could be elected either on a separate ticket in connection with regular elections or in a more composite manner, perhaps through a tripartite representation of unions, private capital (as long as it remains a partner), and the general regional electorate. These questions are still left open by the Social Democratic party and the trade union movement. As regards decisions on general economic policy and structural changes, which determine the parameters of economic activity at the levels of regions and firms, such overall decisions will be made by the Cabinet and Parliament. And that, in brief, describes the multilevel structure of this plan for economic democracy.

A successful launching of this three-stage rocket and its three-level structure, naturally, will require some collaboration from the business community—in addition to the cooperation of legislative powers and of the bargaining power of the best organized trade union movement in the world. But will the business community collaborate?

A lot of personal as well as organizational prestige was invested in the campaign against wage-earners' funds by Sweden's business community. It surely will take some time before the leading campaigners will change their public posture or are replaced by more progressive and imaginative men and women. There are



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some less public defections in the ranks of business leaders, but the "individualism" that is hailed as a prime virtue by conservative ideologists is here conspicuously absent. You will find more individual expression in the debate about wage-earners' funds among spokesmen of labor collectivism—and more collectivist hush-hush and reprisals against independent individuals among ideological individualists in the business community.

Yet Olof Palme has continued to assure the other side that his hand will remain stretched out and the door open for serious talks with business leaders about wage-earners' funds. Kjell Olof Feldt thinks that "reason will prevail."

But are there any reasons for business leaders and managing directors to accept such a "socialist" contraption as wage-earners' funds? Yes, objectively speaking, there are plenty of good reasons for managing directors to accept a prompt and well-coordinated introduction of these funds—at all the three stages! The mix in such "mixed" economies as Sweden's has worked reasonably well in decades that seemed to promise permanent economic growth. But things now turn out to be highly contradictory. One finds stagflation and the rupturing of wage/profit trade-offs; increasing social costs along with a decreasing capacity for carrying these costs; an increase in the price of financial capital as demand diminishes through stagnation; a growing attraction to unproductive speculation in carpets, diamonds, art collections, and so on. In the "deep structure" underlying several of these contradictions we can discern the larger contradiction between capital and labor, which will yield less and less to resolution by conventional means. Yet we can only move forward if a new accord can be struck between capital and labor.

The first stage of building a system of wage-earners' funds through a combination of wage restraint and collective profit-sharing would also be the first step toward advancing such accord. If achieved, it would certainly offer Sweden's industry a great comparative advantage. The profit shared with labor would not be lost, all the misinformation to the contrary. That profit, of course, would be put back into production, with costs further reduced by wage restraint. And experienced Swedish business leaders know that the Swedish labor movement always has been "productivist."

Shareholders also have very little to fear from wage-earners' funds during their lifetime —if their main interest is in substantial dividends rather than economic power. The prices of stocks and shares are likely to increase once wage-earners' funds start buying shares with the income from collective profit-sharing. If wage-earners' funds and the new accord move ahead and thereby expand Swedish business, that very likely will solidify the value of Swedish shares and stocks.

Those relatively few big shareholders who are more interested in economic power than in earning dividends may indeed have something to fear from the wage-earners' funds. Clearly, such shareholders so far are psychologically unprepared to share that power in successive stages with those who actually create a substantial part of it with their work. But since most big shareholders in Sweden are organizations and institutions—companies owning other companies—such psychological hangups are probably less important today than they were in the past in determining attitudes toward changing ownership patterns.

If wage-earners' funds can be introduced and democratized during the 1980s without destructive obstruction from the business community, it could be one of the most important preconditions for a reasonably successful expansionist economic policy. Some of the most crucial parameters of economic activity (such as the wage/profit trade-off point) could be changed almost immediately, to the advantage of economic expansion, while others (such as the profit elasticity of investments) might not change for some time.

But how can we assume that there is even the possibility that Sweden's business community may be forthcoming with collaboration, or at least a passive and nonobstructive response, to the introduction of wage-earners' funds—when all the bourgeois parties and the Swedish Confederation of Employers have claimed that wage-earners' funds constitute a socialist system? How could the business community ever concur in the building of socialism in Sweden?

Yet wage-earners' funds do not constitute



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

socialism—particularly not anything resembling the existing "socialism" of Eastern Europe. Since it would take me too far afield to discuss here other, more democratic models of socialism, let me simply emphasize a few important aspects of this whole question. First, in the recent political history of Sweden, it has been a recurrent practice of the more conservative wing of Sweden's business community to label as socialist every structural reform proposed by the Social Democrats—often reforms that later became generally accepted. Second, from a Marxist point of view it might be more correct to characterize wage-earners' funds as a further refinement of capitalism. A well-known Swedish economic historian has suggested that a system based on such funds be called "democratic collective capitalism." However, with a dialectical approach to historical development, it is possible to view this kind of capitalism as a step toward some sort of democratic self-managing socialism.

That progressive Swedish businessmen and managers might contribute to our taking this step toward socialism in Sweden through implementing the acceptance of wage-earners' funds is no more remarkable an assumption than the fact that capitalism has contributed to and frequently accepted the creation of trade unions and socialist parties, and even has collaborated with them. After all, trade unions and socialist parties also may be steps toward socialism. But that is another story. In conclusion, let us look at the short-term policy of the new Social Democratic government with regard to the present economic crisis.

Differing from the so far largely unsuccessful attempt at economic expansionism in Mitterrand's France, the expansionist policy pursued by Sweden's Social Democrats is attempting to boost the economy by means other than opening the purse to Keynesian increases in consumer demand. In Sweden the boost presently relies more on the supply side. "Supply-side" economics is nothing new in Sweden, and certainly not something adopted in order to appear fashionable. The well-known Swedish labor-market policy of the 1950s and '60s, designed by trade union economists Meidner and Rehn, was essentially an application of what today is called "supply-side economics"—now recommended by neoconservatives. But dogmatism—"supply-side," Keynesian, or otherwise—is not the style of the Swedish Social Democrats. It is well-known that they pioneered applications of Keynesianism in the 1930s, with an added mixture of Marxism, some home-made ingredients, and a big devaluation of the Swedish crown.

A big devaluation indeed is an important ingredient in the Social Democratic recipe for the mid-'80s. But there are other ingredients. In the 1982 election campaign, the Social Democrats promised not only "supply-side" expansionism (without explicitly using the term). They also made some very concrete promises—to improve child-care allowances, restore the value of unemployment benefits, and to increase old-age pensions, which had been reduced through a public belt-tightening during the reign of the bourgeois governments of 1977-82. Olof Palme also warned the electorate that an increased sales tax and a reduction of real wages are necessary to put the house in order again. Obviously, enough of the electorate trusted the Social Democrats to be able to do just that.

Yet putting the house in order again will not be an easy task in a world of protracted global recession, and with a foreign debt that has grown from virtually zero in 1976 (before the bourgeois parties took over) to a figure so high in 1983 that it will take plenty of hard work and frugality throughout the '80s to pay it off.

If the Social Democrats succeed in remaining in power throughout the '80s and manage to launch all stages and levels of economic democracy, based on a full-fledged system of wage-earners' funds, it will not only be a great accomplishment but also an extremely interesting social experiment with significant implications for political and economic theory. Although rather late in accepting ideas of workers' participation and wage-earners' funds when compared with labor movements in other parts of Europe, Swedish labor now is in a better position than most of them to pursue this innovative experiment consistently and intelligently.

A number of labor leaders and economists



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now indicate that the Swedish labor movement's traditional skepticism about workers' participation was largely caused by fears that such participation would involve co-optation and responsibilities while yielding few new substantial rights and benefits. Only after labor's political and trade-union branches had achieved a number of other crucial goals, and only when it had achieved a position of strength vis-à-vis the business community (which now is deeply troubled by its inability to deliver economic growth), could these fears of co-optation be dissipated within the labor movement.

Under such new conditions it might be possible once again to achieve another "historical compromise" between labor and capital—a compromise now a bit closer to real "economic democracy." This is what some leaders of the Social Democratic party and of Sweden's trade-union movement are saying today.

---

The original outline for wage-earners' funds has been described by the main designer, Rudolf Meidner, in his book *Employee Investment Funds: An Approach to Collective Capital Formation* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978). A broader panorama of this crossroad of social democracy can be found in U. Himmelstrand, G. Ahrne, and L. Lundberg, *Beyond Welfare Capitalism: Issues, Actors, and Forces in Societal Change* (London: Heinemann, 1981). □


**MODERN 'ASIATIC' DESPOTISM**

**~masquerading in communist workers' ideology**

by Frank A. Barbaria

A comparative study of Soviet and ancient 'Asiatic' despotisms. Critical theoretical errors by Marx are revealed; errors still adhered to by present-day Marxist movements; errors which aid the Kremlin's masquerade.

***400 pp., 10 maps, Index of Concepts. LC: 81-69826***
***Cloth $12.°° ISBN 0-9606992-0-1; Paper $5.°°***

**Add $1.00 for mailing; U.S. or Worldwide**

**IDEAS (Inter-Disciplinary Endeavor to Analyse Societies)**
**8649 - Springfield Avenue, La Mesa, California 92041**




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip Kasinitz

# Neo-Marxist Views of the State

The revolution is not at hand. Although this fact is no surprise to anyone, it does merit some reflection. At the very moment when the industrialized West faces something akin to those "crises of capitalism" that Marxists have talked about for so long, almost everyone is finally admitting the obvious. Capitalism, for all its profound current difficulties, has outlived the Marxist predictions of its demise. This has not led to the progressive "immiseration" of the masses (at least in the industrialized nations)—and while capitalist societies may have changed greatly since Marx's day, reform, not revolution, has been the primary force in that transformation.

In light of these facts, it is not surprising that "theories of the state" now are the major growth industry in Marxist and neo-Marxist scholarship. As Marxist writers shift their attention from the question of how revolutions come about to that of why capitalist societies endure, the structure, history, and current problems of the welfare state take on a new importance. Yet while many scholars look to the expanding role of the state as an explanation of the persistence of capitalism, few agree on what that role is or exactly how it is played. Even reference to scripture is of little help; for, like all holy texts, Marx bears a variety of interpretations. The notion of the state as the "executive committee" of the bourgeoisie has been interpreted to mean both that members of the bourgeoisie must participate directly in the governance of the state—and also that they need not do so because the state by its nature "functions" as an arm of the proprietary class. Still other analysts have pointed to the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* as evidence that Marx himself, when not committed to the angry polemics of the *Manifesto*, saw the state as something more than an executive committee.

What follows, then, is a review of the major trends in recent neo-Marxist discussions of the state in advanced capitalism. Following John Mollenkopf and Theda Skocpol,[1] I shall describe the writers I consider "instrumentalists" or "structuralists," with the "structuralists" further divided between the functionalist approach of the late Nicos Poulantzas and the class-struggle approach in the recent work of Fred Block.

## Instrumentalism

"INSTRUMENTAL" VIEWS are those that tend to describe the state as the instrument of a specific social class. The common starting point for this loose grouping of writers is the refutation of pluralist theories of politics. All instrumentalists seek to demonstrate the continuing tendency of the upper class to dominate the state apparatus, while conceding that in "normal times" this class may be somewhat disunited and its members at cross purposes. Control of the state apparatus is maintained, nevertheless, through the formal and informal ties of the upper class to the state. Further, in times of crises members of this class use state intervention in the economy to maintain their position.

It is, therefore, the task of these theorists to demonstrate that the welfare-state reforms of post-New Deal America and Western Europe have not only served the long-run interests of capital but were instigated for that very purpose by the elite or, at least, by a farsighted vanguard of that elite. As Fred Block points out, "the heart of the theory is the idea that enlightened capitalists recognize that the crises



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of capitalism can be resolved through an extension of the state's role."[2]

Beyond this, the instrumentalists take widely different, though overlapping approaches. For the sake of discussion, they may be loosely subdivided into two groups. Both these groups address similar issues. The first consists of the historians of "corporate liberalism," notably James Weinstein and Ronald Radosh, who are concerned with tracing the evolution of the "corporate capitalist state" as a structure for mediating the contradictions of capitalism. (This approach has recently been criticized on historical grounds by Theda Skocpol.[3]) The second group contains such power-structure researchers as G. William Domhoff. This second group has concerned itself with teasing out elite influences on the governmental process as well as documenting class cohesion among the elites, something that more orthodox Marxists take for granted. The power-structure researchers also differ from the orthodox Marxists in that their definition of "elite" (they differ greatly among themselves on the particulars of this definition[4]) tends to be based on a combination of status characteristics, such as social-club membership and educational and ethnic background, as well as neo-Weberian common consumption and life-style characteristics. In this respect they draw extensively, if not always faithfully, on such non-Marxist American sociologists as C. Wright Mills, Floyd Hunter, and Digby Batzell, as well as on Marxist sources.

The power-structure theorists have consciously set out to challenge the pluralists on the latters' turf, examining the ways in which concrete decisions are made rather than the structural conditions that keep some issues from being raised.[5] Their task is to show exactly where and how a cohesive elite comes to dominate political decision-making.

William Domhoff, in response to criticism on this point, protests that while he is philosophically committed to the idea of "class hegemony," he views his role as "accepting the challenge" of the "dominant social science paradigm" and demonstrating upper-class dominance as a matter of "process." Given this, he maintains somewhat ambiguously that upper-class overrepresentation in positions of political power is a significant "indicator" of upper-class power, not that overrepresentation is power itself.[6] Ironically, while Domhoff has been criticized for his somewhat haphazard methodology even by his fellow instrumentalists,[7] he defends his stance by asserting that he is a level-headed empiricist using "the tried and true methods of sociological empiricism—operational definitions, network analysis, context analysis, disproportionate representation, and so forth."[8]

While the instrumentalists draw on Weberian sociology, their initial concepts are firmly within the Marxist tradition. Unlike Mills, they presume the existence of a "ruling class." (Domhoff, like Mills, generally uses the terms "elite" or "power elite." However, his work differs from Mills's precisely in that he maintains he has "grounded the power elite in a social class." Domhoff defines the "power elite as the leadership group or operating arm of the ruling class."[9] This enables him to describe the operation of the elite while remaining theoretically committed to class analysis.)

The instrumentalists' method is basically to tease out the workings of this "ruling class." The central difference between Domhoff and the pluralists is that while they share a method, they tend to look for evidence in different places. Domhoff, informed by his assumptions about what is important in American politics, expands his notion of the state to include interest groups, policy advisory councils, and the candidate-selection process. Pluralists have tended to focus discussion on more manifestly political events and decisions. Both have, not surprisingly, generally found what they were looking for.

Much power-structure research was inspired and in many cases directly undertaken by groups associated with the New Left.[10] As might be expected, this research is sometimes crude and generally "action-oriented." The implicit political agenda accounts for both the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of the approach. Domhoff and his associates have done much to pin down exactly what and whom they mean by "the state." This pragmatic orientation is politically useful (for, as Saul Alinsky has pointed out, it is much easier to organize people to fight Mr. Jones's brutal



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oppression than to fight "social conditions prevalent under late capitalism"). It also has some scholarly merit. Power-structure research tends to avoid many of the muddled generalizations and sweeping assertions that obscure much structural Marxism.

However, as I will attempt to demonstrate, this is also a central theoretical weakness—for two reasons. First, power-structure research has tended to reduce class relations to those of individuals. Second, the instrumentalists have tended to accept a highly deterministic long-run view of history. For example, the mere absence of a socialist labor movement in the contemporary U.S. is seen as evidence that labor must have been somehow co-opted by class-conscious capitalists. The research question then becomes "when" and "how." This demonstrates a view of historical causation that is mainly a matter of faith.

Divisions within the upper classes are often explained in teleological terms. Thus, if the New Deal was opposed by many capitalists, this represents a split between the "vanguard" of corporate capitalism (assumed to have supported, even shaped, Roosevelt's reforms) and regressive elements "still committed to the older ideology." Radosh, Weinstein, and others describe the antistatist elements in American business during the New Deal and since as the smaller, more competitive sectors of American capital.[11]

Domhoff, to his credit, does not place much stock in the "small business" explanation of business conservatism. He notes, in anticipation of Skocpol's criticism, that during its most reactionary period (the late 1930s), the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) was dominated by DuPont interests. Nevertheless, he perceives a split between a "moderately conservative wing" of the American ruling class, represented by the Business Roundtable and the Conference for Economic Development, and an ultraconservative wing represented by the NAM. When the moderate wing "needs" to make co-optive concessions, he asserts, they move to ally with liberals. When they wish to reject the state's further growth, they "sit silently" while the ultraconservative wing, generally a secondary sector, leads the opposition.

Here again, where a split in the ruling class becomes obvious, it is always between a forward-looking sector that understands the "needs" of the future, and a backward-looking sector that is doomed by the "inevitable" progress of history. In light of the profound antistatism evident in so much of the Reagan administration, this view seems highly problematic. That is not to say that the concessions of the New Deal did not turn out to benefit capital; they did. It is rather to question whether a vanguard of capitalists actually saw it that way at the time. Similarly, even though the reforms of the Great Society were clearly not intended to challenge the economic order, it is also clear that a significant sector of American capital perceived these reforms as threatening. Witness the glee they are currently bringing to the job of dismantling them.

### Strength of the Instrumentalist Argument

DESPITE THESE PROBLEMS, there are a number of appealing aspects to the instrumentalist argument as exemplified by Domhoff's work. Most central is a willingness to deal with flesh-and-blood people and real political events rather than with conceptual categories and scholastic abstractions.

- Rather than presume a community of "real interests" based solely on class position, Domhoff attributes collective interests only to groups where a collective identity can be clearly demonstrated. Hence he is defining his "Higher Circles" as those people who belong to certain clubs, are listed in the *Social Register*, attend specific prep schools, or have both a father who was a millionaire entrepreneur or a high-level executive or lawyer *and* appropriate educational credentials. It follows that not all capitalists are elite members, nor are all elite members capitalists.[12] Domhoff also describes the mechanisms through which elites circulate and the social practices by which new members are initiated into the elite's world view. While one may question the significance of the details of his anthropology, he certainly grounds his notions about class cohesion in demonstrable instances of mutual association.

Hence, for Domhoff, a professor who is both



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a millionaire's brother and a millionaire's son, remains a member of the elite, rather than becoming merely another wage slave. On the other hand, the first-generation entrepreneur, raised in poverty, who has no elite trappings and few elite associates, is not a member of the elite, regardless of how large a share of the means of production he may own (although he can later buy his children a place within the elite).

• Rather than speak of "the state" in general terms, as if all capitalist states were the same, Domhoff deals specifically with certain agencies of the American government and describes how they are influenced by the specific needs of specific members of the elite. By thus restricting himself (primarily) to the American case, he is able to avoid the all too common error of imposing European theoretical notions on American reality. Again, while we may disagree with him on the significance of his findings, we must credit him for providing us with the grounds for this disagreement: his work lends itself to testing more readily than does the work of most structural Marxists. Power-structure researchers have localized the concept of upper-class power. For them, classes are not only national entities cut off from local roots, but also local elites with locatable needs and regional interests.

While the presumption that a ruling class exists and needs only to be found colors many of the instrumentalists' findings, their approach has generated a great deal of marvelous data. This material can be useful even to those who do not accept the instrumentalists' premises. For example, one need not accept that an elite consciously "dominates" the state apparatus in order to appreciate the importance of policy councils, industry groups, and even social clubs. Domhoff and others have discovered a great deal about upper-class definition, cohesion, and crystallization. We do not need to accept the whole argument in order to learn profitably from various pieces of it.

Domhoff recently complained that critics and friends alike have tended to trivialize certain aspects of his work, most notably the fascinating description of social clubs in *The Bohemian Grove and Other Resorts* (Harper & Row, 1974). He blames himself for paying too much attention to the anthropological exotica of the ruling class. But this flair for detail would be universally applauded were he investigating the Kikuyu or the contemporary urban "underclass." Americans exhibit a remarkable tendency to condescension toward the upper strata of society. Popular culture frequently portrays the rich as frivolous remnants of a dying class or as "eccentric" millionaires. As the media's enormous coverage of the recent Pulitzer divorce attests, Americans tend to look to the wealthy for entertainment—a view asserting that they are amusing precisely because they are not very important.[13]

Domhoff's critics reflect this tendency. There is, however, nothing trivial about his findings. Indeed, that some of America's wealthiest people share summer retreats with conservative political leaders, that nonelected policy councils dominated by big business continue to have high-level input into foreign-policy decisions, and that 25 percent of our cabinet members in the 20th century have been listed in the Social Register—all these are significant observations.[14] They tell us a great deal about the real distribution of power in America. They do not, however, demonstrate *conscious elite domination* of the state. Power-structure research would tell us a great deal more were its proponents not out to prove so much.

## Weaknesses of the Instrumentalist Approach

INSTRUMENTALISTS ARGUE that since state intervention in the economy and social welfare reforms did occur, and socialism did not, therefore state intervention prevented the otherwise "inevitable" transition to socialism. These reforms, they maintain, not only "saved" capitalism but were instituted by self-interested capitalists. The first point is pure conjecture, although it may be reasonable enough. One need not accept any "inevitable" teleologies to assert that reforms such as the New Deal turned out to be highly functional for U.S. capitalism. However, it does not follow that either Domhoff's "elite" or the greater part of Radosh's "capitalists" realized this at the time.

Skocpol shows not only that a large part of



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the capitalist class was dragged into the New Deal reforms, but that many aspects of the New Deal (most notably the Wagner Act) were in fact profoundly dysfunctional for capitalism in the first few years. Instrumentalist researchers credit capitalists with being incredibly long-sighted (could they have anticipated World War II or the position of labor in the prosperous 1950s?), and the resulting research systematically confuses function and intent. Today, many of us on the left are struck by the fact that a probusiness administration is enthusiastically dismantling regulations we long assumed to be in the interests of business. This does not necessarily mean that we were wrong in our original assumption; but it does mean that we cannot explain the function of these regulations by reference to what individual capitalists think of them.

Instrumentalists also assume that the mere presence of capitalists (or "elite members") or experts sponsored by capitalists within the state proves that those capitalists must rule in their own interests. Even were one to prove that the state was staffed exclusively by those on the payroll of the corporate elite, it does not follow that they would rule in the interests of the elite. As Skocpol points out, one might as well assert that the *Communist Manifesto* was in the interests of capitalism since at the time he wrote it, Marx was being "sponsored" by the son of a wealthy capitalist, one Friedrich Engels.

Since history is full of examples of men and women who led revolutionary struggles against their own class interests, why should we assume that contemporary capitalists are different? Domhoff never documents how many graduates of elite prep schools went on to become SDS activists or Marxist professors. Since in our society many sorts of political involvement are effectively restricted to those who are not pressed by the requirements of making a living, it should not be surprising to find the elite overrepresented throughout the political spectrum, and not merely on the side of the status quo.

The fact is that power-structure researchers, most notably Domhoff, actually are arguing two separate points: elite overrepresentation and elite domination. These are not at all the same thing. While Domhoff sets out to prove the latter, he in fact proves only the former. But who would be surprised by the fact that the wealthiest members of society are disproportionately represented in positions of power? Or, for that matter, who would be surprised by the corresponding fact that the poor and the working class are underrepresented? Does anyone today really maintain that power is equally distributed among U.S. citizens? Unequal distribution of political resources is the very cornerstone of the pluralist argument that Domhoff is supposedly trying to refute.[15] The question is, at what point does overrepresentation constitute potential *domination*, that is, the real ability to control the outcome of all or at least of the most significant political disputes? By disproving the existence of equal representation in the U.S., instrumentalists have won a victory over a straw man.

Further, as both Block and Poulantzas have pointed out, the instrumentalists have tended to reduce the whole relationship of state and economy to that of capitalists and bureaucrats. Domhoff is so wedded to the notion of a self-conscious ruling class that he recently responded to criticism by asserting:

> . . . it seems highly unlikely that leaders within the ruling class, especially given the uncertainties of a capitalist economy, would be content to trust their fate to the workings of invisible structural restraints stressed by the structuralists. . . .[16]

Clearly, Domhoff assumes that the decision to delegate authority is a decision that capitalists are able to make; they hold the power to decide whether or not they will "trust" someone else. The model here is of a collection of individual decision-makers, not of a class in the Marxian sense. From Domhoff's point of view the question of how the ruling class might lose political battles and be *forced* into arrangements that turn out to help it in the long run cannot even come up.

This concept of power—power as always exercised at the pleasure of an elite that makes necessary concessions but remains firmly in control—underestimates the amount of real struggle by which reforms have been forced



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upon the state from below. By focusing entirely on upper-class concessions rather than working-class victories, Domhoff underestimates the power to force changes, or at least to disrupt the system, that labor and other interest groups may exert, particularly in times of economic and social upheaval.

If the state is an instrument of a given social class, it is difficult to conceive of other groups using control of the state apparatus to exact concessions over the vocal objections of that class. Yet in the history of urban American politics, this often has happened. The political machines were not, to be sure, any real threat to capitalism. But it would be a gross misreading of history to assert that Domhoff's self-conscious "higher circles" ever *perceived* the governments of William Marcy Tweed or James Michael Curley, for example, as being in their interests. In fact, the Social Register set was conspicuous in its attempts to "reform" and otherwise combat the immigrant machines. Many of these efforts were successful but, significantly, many were not.

Finally, instrumentalists have also tended to underestimate the autonomous bureaucracy as an independent force in the administration of the state. The real power of unionized civil service workers to shape policy and even bring the state to a point of fiscal crisis (as in New York City in 1975) cannot be explained by the instrumentalists' approach—for it is a strange "tool" that starts to exact its own demands of the user.

If, then, the instrumentalists' view of the state cannot facilitate an understanding of American politics, we must examine the more "structuralist" views. While these are extremely diverse, I will follow Skocpol's analysis and describe two distinct trends within the structuralist argument: what Skocpol terms "political functionalism," best exemplified by the early works of Nicos Poulantzas, and the "class struggle" position best seen in the recent works of Fred Block. While hardly representative of the total of structuralist arguments, they provide a useful contrast. While both share the structural starting point of the autonomous state, they represent extremes within the structuralist camp—from the most deterministic (Poulantzas) to the least (Block).

## Political Functionalism: A Relatively Autonomous State

THE LATE NICOS POULANTZAS, whose debate with Ralph Miliband was the starting point for much of the instrumentalist vs. structuralist debate, viewed the state as a "relatively autonomous" institution: "autonomous," because state policy is seen as independent of the wills of capitalists; "relative" because of the ultimately "determinant role of relations of production."[17]

Poulantzas criticizes Miliband (he could have made an even stronger case against Domhoff) for not seeing classes as "objective structures and their relations as an objective system of regular connections, a structure and a system whose agents, men, are in the words of Marx 'bearers' of it. . . ."[18] For Poulantzas, the central difficulty in the work of modern Marxists is the confusion between men as actors and men as bearers of structural relations larger than themselves. The view that credits too much agency to individual actors is, he argues, a non-Marxist view. In his reading of Marx, it is the structure of capitalist society and its culture that makes the state an executive committee of the bourgeoisie, not the decisions or actions of individuals.

Power for Poulantzas is the "capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interest."[19] The state's interests correspond to those of the dominant class and hence, since classes are in constant struggle, must be in opposition to the interests of all classes other than the dominant one. Since the capitalist state was created by capitalists, the state's structural interests simply are the interests of capitalism, whether or not contemporary capitalists and contemporary bureaucrats realize the identity.

This means that direct participation of capitalists in the state, while possible, is not at all necessary for capitalist control of the state: this is only one possible arrangement and, moreover, a "chance and contingent one." Indeed, Poulantzas goes on to assert that under the modern capitalist system the state is likely to function best when capitalists are *not* directly involved. State bureaucrats must transcend the short-sighted interests of individual capitalists



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in favor of the general interests of capitalism. Hence the state may enforce necessary concessions, engage in long-term planning, and defend the interests of capitalism over those of particular capitalists. In addition, such an "autonomous" state serves to disunite workers, promote the privatized citizen and undermine the politics of class struggle. It is, in short, best for capitalism "when the ruling class is not the politically governing class."[20]

The major strength of this approach is that it separates the question of capitalist domination of society (Marx's question) from that of elite domination of the state apparatus (Domhoff's question). Hence Poulantzas is able to explain what happens in those situations where state intervention in the economy is needed to accomplish things that the nature of the competitive market prevents capitalists from accomplishing for themselves.

However, to call Poulantzas' notion of the state "autonomous" is quite misleading. For while he grants autonomy from class domination, he nevertheless paints a picture of a state utterly determined by structural imperatives, where all outcomes other than "revolution" are entirely predictable. For all his Marxist faith, Poulantzas is in many ways profoundly conservative. Anything other than "revolution" will "inevitably" be co-opted by capital. How is one to know when one places pressure on the state whether one is creating the groundwork for revolution or merely allowing the state to mediate social contradictions? In the long run, all nonrevolutionary change seems to be functional for the owning class. This view is problematic on two important counts.

First, if it is so, all history is predictable, so why bother to analyze specific situations (as Marx did)? Second, it negates as counterproductive all the very real progress that production workers have made without revolution in bettering their lives. It ignores the possibility of outcomes that are neither desirable for capital *nor* revolutionary.

Poulantzas' emphasis on objective structures implies an actorless notion of power and an ahistorical notion of the state. Men and women are cut out of the picture entirely, and the state has no specific history of its own—as if capitalists one day simply called it into being. His theory is so huge that we are left asking, "What state?" "When?" "By whom?" He ignores the unique character of the American, the French, or the German state. His formulation is based more upon its own internal logic than upon any concrete history.

Ironically, while Poulantzas can accept the fact of division within the capitalist class, he postulates the state as a unified whole that acts in a unified manner. But this surely contradicts what we know of the history of state intervention in the economy. While he denies that short-sighted capitalists understand their own long-run interests, he gives a remarkable crystal ball to short-sighted bureaucrats. He denies that their interests are ever at odds with those of the dominant class. He changes the state from the "tool" of conspirators to the "tool" of structures, and this is equally unacceptable.

### A Fully Autonomous State

FRED BLOCK—WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING the contributions both of the instrumentalists and of Poulantzas—attempts to come up with a theory of the state capable of explaining class domination without reducing the state to a permanent conspiracy or a wholly determined structure. He still needs to explain what he perceives as the dominance of capital. But he has enough of a sense of history to want to leave room for struggles whose outcomes are not known in advance. Following Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, he also wants to explain division *within* the capitalist class.

Block starts from the idea that modern capitalism consists of a division of labor between the rulers and the accumulators. He sees these two spheres as autonomous with no "inherent" reason why the state should serve the class of accumulators. Hence the question is reversed. Rather than ask whether the state can ever act against capitalist interests, Block asks why it tends to act in those interests. What structural factors reduce the likelihood of state managers turning against the dominant class? Why do state managers, who do not hesitate to intervene in the economy in the face of capitalist resistance, still tend to rationalize and reform capitalism rather than eliminate it?

Like Poulantzas, Block sees capitalists as



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concerned primarily with short-term profits. Unlike Poulantzas, he recognizes that these same capitalists are under constant pressure from workers who have their own goals. And the state, rather than simply refereeing the contest, is itself a third interested party. State officials also have their own goals: the maintenance of their rule, political stability, the steady collection of revenue, and the expansion of their own domain.

Both capital and labor apply pressure on the state to do their bidding and to "mediate the contradictions" of the system in ways favorable to them. Thus the state in the modern world is in a uniquely vulnerable position: if the economic sector fails, it is the government, not generally the economic system, that will fall. If taxes cannot be collected or if a fiscal crisis develops, it is the state that will have to cut back, its officials who will lose jobs and power.

The state therefore seeks economic stability not because of any mythical structural "needs," but because of simple self-interest on the part of politicians and bureaucrats. Either capital or labor (even movements of poor people outside the mainstream economy) can disrupt the economy. A large enough disruption can force the state to act or bring about the collapse of a particular administration or government. Capital, however, can disrupt the economy far more easily than labor. All capital needs to do is to refuse to invest. This requires no conspiracy. It is merely the aggregate of the individual capitalist responses to what is perceived to be a poor climate for investment. This aggregate response constitutes an effective veto over state policies that are interpreted as "bad for business." This is true for all capitalist states, but the veto works best in peripheral ones from which investors can easily shift their assets to other countries (witness Chile under Allende). More generally, however, the refusal to invest does not mean that the capitalists will themselves suffer from the resulting economic stagnation; they merely shift investment from productive, job-creating, stability-producing areas to savings and luxuries: Krugerrands, paintings, or rare wines.

Normally, this capital veto cannot be matched by labor. It is very difficult for labor to disrupt the system since this requires putting thousands of workers out on the streets and keeping up a sustained pressure. However, during certain exceptional periods, such as a depression or a war, when popular unrest runs high or when conscientious, willing workers are necessary to national safety, the labor veto becomes easier to apply. Under these special conditions, the state must respond to labor rather than to capital because labor can bring down the state much faster than capital can. Therefore, the state will intervene to restore economic stability, if necessary, at the expense of capital. But this does not lead to socialism because the same need for economic stability that forces the state to mediate on behalf of labor during a crisis will also force it to structure its intervention so as to appease capital as soon as the workers have left the streets and the crisis has passed.

State managers are always aware, as Block writes, that "exceptional periods are generally of a limited duration" and that they "will return to their earlier dependence on capitalist cooperation."[21] This explains for Block the "tendency" of state intervention to aid capital without denying the importance of conflict or "the continuous possibility of other outcomes."[22] Further, while arguing that the state will endeavor to restore business confidence, Block denies Poulantzas' claim that the state always does what is "necessary" toward this end:

> This pattern is not a smoothly working functional process always producing the same result [Block writes]. State managers can make all kinds of mistakes, including excessive concessions to the working class. State managers have no special knowledge of what is necessary to make capitalism more rational. They grope toward effective action as best they can within existing political constraints. . . .[23]

Up to this point, Block is postulating a state that (as in Poulantzas' model) can intervene on behalf of "a more general rationality." State bureaucrats "unlike the individual capitalist . . . do not have to operate on the narrow basis of a profit maximizing rationality."[24] At the same time, he gives these bureaucrats no crystal ball in which to perceive the "perfect" capitalist future. He describes the tendency of capital to prevail without resorting to hypo-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thetical "real" interests (knowable only by astute social scientists) or to any mumbo-jumbo about structure. This much of his analysis I find quite appealing. But Block must be feeling a bit far from home by now because he adds an epicycle to his formulation to give it a touch of conventional Marxist teleology.

Class struggle is also, Block maintains, functional for capital in that every workers' victory forces capital to improve methods of production and control. If wages go up, capitalists have to develop more capital-intensive technology. This "diminishes the capacity of workers to win wage gains." In short, "class struggle is responsible for much of the economic dynamism of capitalism."[25] Changes in the relations of production produce changes in the means of production.

Every step of this cycle pushes capitalism forward. It also humanizes and at the same time rationalizes and reinforces capitalist domination. This account gives to Block's theory an uncomfortable determinism of its own. For, where is this spiral leading? Is social democracy the highest form (and hence the "last stage") of capitalism? Is it a step toward liberation or a more insidious form of oppression? Is incremental reform necessary and progressive, or does it merely rationalize the system that must be smashed by a vanguard party of some sort? I remain uncertain as to whether Block is an advocate of social democracy or Leninism, and whether he believes that the second must follow the first.

Block's commitment to the class struggle as the motor of history mars his otherwise admirable attempt to develop a neo-Marxist theory that has real explanatory value for modern capitalist policies. Perhaps he feels that to abandon this notion would place him outside the Marxian tradition. (It would certainly make his work substantially more "neo" than "Marxist"!) This would be unfortunate, for if the arguments I have reviewed teach us anything, it is the futility of explaining the contemporary state by fitting it into worn-out teleologies.

WHAT IS NEEDED, it seems to me, is an analysis of the state that continues to ask vital "Marxist questions"—What is the relationship between economic inequality and political domination? How can we change the status quo? At the same time we must acknowledge the indeterminate nature of politics and the unpredictability of history. Given the expanding role of the state in capitalist societies (not to mention the overwhelming and often terrifying role of the state in noncapitalist societies), we can hardly afford to underestimate the state's independence or to conceive of it as a reflection of anything. For neo-Marxist political analysis to move forward, it must not rely on old formulations about the necessary interconnectedness of state, economy, and society. It must view these interconnections afresh in light of the dynamic nature of capitalism as it is today. It must abandon theoretical tools that obscure more than they elucidate—which is, after all, exactly what Marx himself did.

## Notes

[1] See John Mollenkopf, "Theories of the State and Power Structure Research," *Insurgent Sociologist* 4 (Spring 1975). Also Theda Skocpol, "Political Response to Capitalist Crises: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the New Deal," *Politics and Society* 10, no. 12 (1980), pp. 155–201.

[2] Fred Block, "Beyond Corporate Liberalism," *Social Problems* 24 (February 1977), p. 355.

[3] Skocpol, "Political Response. . . ."

[4] For an analysis of various definitions of the term "elite," see Harold Kerbo and Richard Della Fava, "The Empirical Side of the Power Elite Debate," *Sociological Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1979), pp. 5–22.

[5] This "decisionist" view of power, emphasizing the ability of actors to effect political decisions, is best exemplified in Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961). It is criticized in Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1974), as a "one-dimensional view of power."

[6] G. William Domhoff, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 9 and 23.

[7] Kerbo and Della Fava, "The Empirical Side. . . ." Also Ted George Goertzel, *Political Sociology* (New York: Rand McNally, 1976).

[8] G. William Domhoff, "Provincial in Paris: Finding



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the French Council on Foreign Relations, *Social Policy*, March–April 1981.

[9] Domhoff, *The Powers That Be*, pp. 14 and 13.

[10] This connection and its implications are more fully explored in Mollenkopf, "Theories of the State. . . ."

[11] Ronald Radosh, "The Myth of the New Deal," in Radosh and Rothbard, eds., *A New Leviathan* (New York: Dutton, 1972). See also James Weinstein, *The Corporate Idea in the Liberal State* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).

[12] Although there is some confusion on this point in Domhoff's work, in the *Higher Circles* (New York: Random House, 1970) he is clearly describing an elite status group as distinct from all capitalists, whereas in his later works he uses the notion of "elites" and "ruling class" almost interchangeably. Although he never makes the distinction precise, he seems concerned with the social cohesion of the elite at times, while at other times exploring the political influence of capitalists (not necessarily elite members by his own criteria).

[13] For many Americans, indeed, the primary sources of information about the upper class are the same tabloids, magazines, and TV shows that provide information about other "celebrities": movie stars and popular musicians. These media tend to trivialize the rich by presenting them as fascinating but utterly irrelevant to "the real world." Consider the fact that the late Arthur Bloomingdale received more notoriety for his sexual exploits than he ever got for his economic or political influence.

[14] G. William Domhoff, *Bohemian Grove and Other Resorts* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), and Domhoff, *The Powers That Be*; see also Richard Zweigenhaft, "Who Represents America?" *Insurgent Sociologist* 4, no. 3 (1975).

[15] Several pluralist theorists, in refuting elite domination of American politics, are careful to point out that they by no means suppose that power is distributed equally. See, e.g., David Riesman's classic statement on "Veto Groups" in *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); for a pluralist critique of recent "elitist" theory, consider Andrew Greeley, *Building Coalitions: American Politics for the 1970s* (New York: Watts, 1974).

[16] Domhoff, "Provincial in Paris . . . ," p. 6.

[17] Nicos Poulantzas, interviewed by Stuart Hall and Alan Hunt, in *Socialist Review* 48 (Nov.–Dec. 1979), p. 67.

[18] Nicos Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State," *New Left Review* 58 (Nov.–Dec. 1969).

[19] Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London:Verso, 1973), pp. 104 and 120.

[20] Poulantzas, "Problem of the Capitalist State," p. 73.

[21] Fred Block, "Beyond Relative Autonomy: State Managers as Historical Subjects," *New Political Science* 2 (Fall 1981), p. 39.

[22] Fred Block, "The Ruling Class Does Not Rule," *Socialist Revolution* 33 (1977), p. 23.

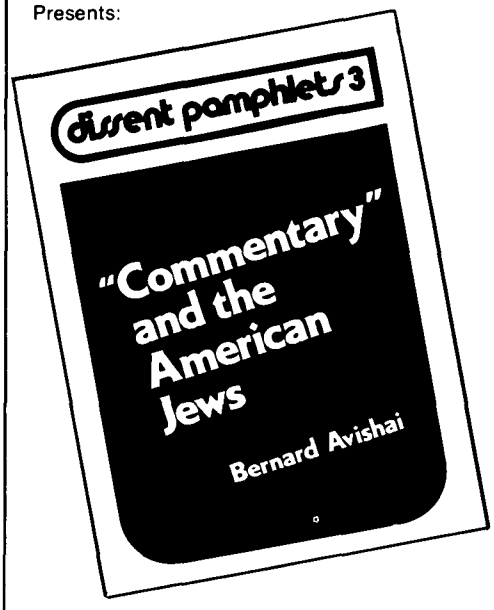
[23] Ibid., p.26.

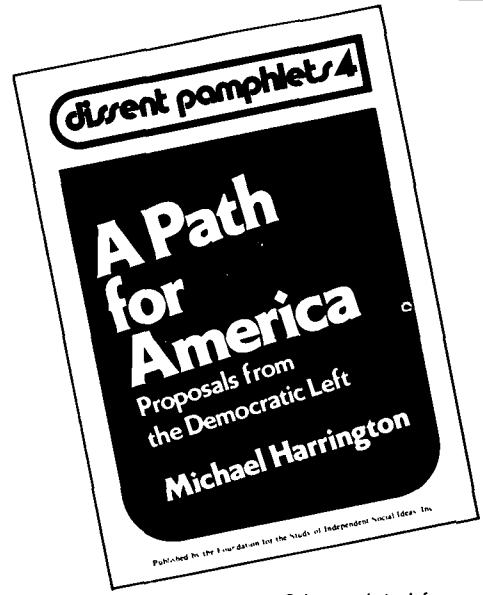
[24] Ibid., p.20.

[25] Ibid., p.21. □


**The Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc.**

Presents:




# 3 is reprinted from *Dissent*, Spring 1981, and was there entitled "Breaking Faith."

**ORDER FROM F.S.I.S.I.**

*521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017*

*$1.25 per copy; $1.00 in bundles of 2 or more (for the same pamphlet). Two separate pamphlets $2.*


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jerry G. Watts

# "It Just Ain't Righteous"

**On Witnessing Black Crooks and White Cops**

On numerous occasions I've seen police cars come to a screeching halt and policemen scatter in apprehending a suspect. Each time, save one, the apprehended black male was dragged along the pavement, smacked in the face, or otherwise abused. This happened as a matter of course, after he was handcuffed, and before he was thrown into the van.

It has become an unstated rule in the black community that a crowd should quickly gather around an arrested suspect in order to restrain the behavior of the police officers. In some instances, for reasons that still baffle me, one of the arresting officers will almost impulsively, as if by instinct, kick the handcuffed black man in the groin. Deduce what you may from this, but I've long since realized that in all important respects stereotypes of black men might as well be true. Such was the nature of law enforcement in my neighborhood.

Like many Ivy League institutions located in old neighborhoods, Yale is situated between an affluent, predominantly white neighborhood, and a deteriorating, predominantly black one. I belong to that decreasing number of Yalies who live in the black neighborhood. For reasons of ignorance, limited funds, indifference or design, we have chosen to place more importance on lower rents than on the probability of physical assault or burglary.

My apartment rests conspicuously within New Haven's four-square-block prostitute district. By daylight it is a relatively safe, black working-class neighborhood with an interracial spattering of Yalies and a smaller community of elderly whites who were unable or, in some cases, unwilling to move when the composition of the neighborhood changed. By night, the streets become the province of the prostitutes and their business partners in the underground economy.

In first adjusting to the realities of this environment, I decided not to let it restrict my movement in any measurable degree. I regularly frequented all-night cafes and spent far too many 4:00 A.M. hours browsing in an all-night bookstore. This freedom I assumed because I was large, black, and male. More important, I had also acquired the appropriate night-time ethnic accouterments. My vocabulary became more "down." I wore a rather large-brimmed black hat and occasionally would go so far as to wear sun glasses at midnight, to block out the glare of the moon. Regardless of what I wore, I would walk with a black, urban "dip" that I had inadvertently acquired while growing up in D.C. This night uniform, which became my passport through the streets of New Haven, was quite successful, or so I thought, at keeping young hoodlums away. It also attracted a great deal of attention from passing police cars. I kept late hours until several conversations with authentic street people convinced me of the unpredictability of street crime. I had not become a victim but it was primarily due to chance. Now I rarely venture out at night.

In my apartment building I have been reduced to maintaining a constant crime vigil. At least once every night, I abruptly turn off the sound on the television only to discover that the steps on the stairs are nothing more than someone late for a waiting cab, or screams down the hall merely boisterous laughter. I have broken up fights in the hallways.

On those occasions when it was too dangerous for me to intervene, I would call the New Haven police. More often than not my plea for



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emergency help would result in a police cruiser one-half hour later. Nothing unusual, I'm told. Yet when Jimmy Baldwin, Huey Newton, and Nicki Giovanni were hollering about white ghetto cops as occupational troops, I was living in a stable, middle-class, black neighborhood in Washington, D.C., teaching my younger brother to find "Officer Friendly" whenever he felt lost. The police were, as I recall, quite amiable to those like myself who kept our faces clean, our shoes polished, and waved at passing bus drivers. Though my image of police officers has changed drastically, I still think it ridiculous to label white policemen in black ghettos the primary repressive arm of the capitalist state. What about the ghetto itself?

Once, while I was listening to Cosell's baseball commentary, the blaring of rapidly approaching sirens suddenly came to a halt in front of my building.

I cut off the light and peered through the crack at the side of my shades, expecting to see another episode of "Bravado Police in Action." Instead I saw firemen darting into a house across the street. Others were racing with hoses to the nearest hydrant. I switched my light back on. The drizzle made the smoke billowing from the upstairs windows all the more intense.

The inhabitants of the house, three young white guys who had only recently moved in, were running up and down the stairs bringing out many of their valued possessions and placing them in the first-floor foyer. I was not sure whether they were racing against the spreading second-floor flames or the axes and hoses of the firemen. There was a lot of excitement. A crowd was gathering.

An hour or so later, the baseball game was over. I joined the remnants of the crowd in the rain, attired (but of course) in my ethnic veneer. The last of the firemen were now leaving the house, while others were folding the hoses back into the rear of the truck.

Standing now across the street from the smoldering house I could see the three white guys engaged in animated discussion in their backyard. An almost midget-sized black guy, who looked to be well over 35, stood next to me, holding a newspaper over his head as a shield against the drizzle. He asked me if I wanted a "square" (cigarette). Looking at the three white guys, he muttered something about white people and fire.

"You shoulda seen these white dudes. The fire was burning and jumpin' out the window and they went running back into the heat just to save a few nickels and dimes. You know they got insurance or money in the bank to buy back anything they lose, so why all this hero action?"

I nodded, and he continued to talk about whites in general.

"A white man will take a chance on his whole life just to save some old plates, raggedy suits, and other kinds of nonsense like that. A brother would've been out that house the first sign that somethin' was burnin', and he ain't even got no money, no insurance, or nothin' like that. Am I right? Am I?"

I took one last drag on the cigarette, nodded again, and bid the fellow goodbye.

After coffee, I heard the trucks pull away. Now barefoot and dry, I squeezed behind the sofa to lower the window shades. I immediately noticed an incongruity. Though the trucks had departed, four or five teen-agers were still mingling around the front of the house. I wondered what they were looking at. The action was over and the drizzle, though light, was steady. And why was the short black fellow whom I had just spoken to standing, newspaper over his head, in exactly the same spot where I had left him?

Suddenly I realized that they may not have been there for the fire at all. They were up to something else. But what? The firemen were gone, and the three white guys were probably sifting through their wreckage upstairs. So why? The front door leading to the foyer was open and whatever had been rushed from the smoke-filled upstairs to the foyer was there for all to see. I couldn't be sure, but they certainly appeared to be casing the house. Perhaps I was sure but worried that the origin of my certainty was racist, for hadn't it been based upon the fact that these teen-agers were black and Puerto Rican?

A week or so earlier I had informed, that is, warned a young white waitress that I had left a tip for her on the table. She seemed to be an industrious person for not only did she wait on



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the tables but, unknown to most customers, she was the co-owner of the establishment. Consequently, I felt angry that the fellow who took the booth after me looked like the tip-stealing kind; a tall, unevenly bearded, sloppily clothed black man. The waitress seemed to be too naive to appreciate the source of my anxiety. She said thanks and that she would get the tip in a minute. By the way, she asked, had I ever met Fred, the guy who was co-owner of the place and whom she had recently married? She always told me that he read as much as I did. Fred was seated, tall and unshaven, in my booth.

The teen-agers were fidgeting as if nervous. Remembering Fred, I reminded myself of my intraethnic racist beliefs. But why were they waiting? I became increasingly angered at the white guys who lived there for not being smart enough to come to the front of their house after the firemen had left. Socially naive people are burdens to those of us who live in these neighborhoods. I know many Yale feminists who refuse to be escorted by males when they walk through this neighborhood at night. This "take back the night" assertiveness is fine, but the burden of worry and ultimate intervention rests upon the shoulders of the responsible residents in this area who have to look out for these people, since the night hasn't quite yet been taken. The social naiveté of these white guys increased my anxieties, for now I would have to act.

In a situation similar to this a few years earlier, I had shouted down from my fourth-floor window to the bystanders, letting them know that I was watching them. In that instance, I am convinced, I saved both the possessions of the negligent owners and kept the young guys from committing a felony. This time, however, I was concerned that my second-floor apartment window would make me a less-than-anonymous responsible citizen. A brick could reach the second story. I hesitated to say anything. Remembering the instructions from the "Crime Stoppers' " segment of a Dick Tracy comic, I fastened my eyes on one of the teen-agers so as to be able to give an accurate description of him if necessary.

As if aware of my neutralized commitment, several of the young men sprang into the foyer just then, grabbed something, and ran with the others down the street. The short guy standing on my side of the street darted away, newspaper held in hand. I cursed myself, the white guys who lived there, and the black and Puerto Rican thieves. If the white guys had more common sense they would have eliminated the opportunity for these lads to steal. If I had been more confident in my intuitions and less concerned with appearing racist, I would have done something to dissuade them.

I put my clothes on, crossed the street, and called out to the inhabitants of the house, who were, if you believe it, still around the back talking. I described what I had seen and suggested that they inventory the items in the foyer.

"Damn it!" the tall, blonde-haired guy retorted. "Two stereo amps are missing. I don't believe this damn world."

Chance would have it that while we were talking, a police car cruised toward us. They stopped it, reported the theft, and described the stolen equipment. I described two of the five individuals, including the short guy who had offered me the cigarette. The cop took my address, name, phone number, and date of birth. One of the white guys got into the police car in case he was needed to identify the stolen goods. I went back upstairs, and prepared to go to bed. There was no chance that they would catch those people in this neighborhood.

An hour later, the cops were knocking at my door.

"Mr. Watts, would you come to attempt an identification?"

Once again, I put my clothes on. Only this time I came outside without my ethnic attire. I was with the police, so who needed that? Or was it fear of the police? I had seen lineups on television before, but I had never attempted to identify someone. I really didn't want to go down to the station but it was, I thought, what I had to do. Emerging from my front door, I immediately saw two police cruisers, each with a suspect seated in the rear. I was trapped. There would be no ride to the station, and no lineup. Instead of taking any precautions to protect my identity, I was supposed to identify



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these suspects while they and the rest of this black community identified me. As each police car arrived, the arresting officer would introduce me to his colleagues and the gathering crowd.

"This is Mr. Jerry G. Watts. He is the only known witness to the crime."

I had only gotten to know the faces of the suspects. But they would know my face, name, address, and testimony.

I was led to one car where I was told to look at a young man who appeared to be 17 or 18 years old. Chance would have it that he was the one on whom I had focused my attention.

"Yes, he's one of them."

The young man attempted to stare coldly at me, but, perhaps because of the window between us and the police officers with us, the stare did not intimidate me. Instead, I perceived the fear in his eyes.

"A kid," I said to myself. "Damn." I repeated my answer to a second officer, whereupon the arresting cop decided that it was now time for what he called a "positive ID." I soon discovered that this meant I would have to identify him face-to-face. He was now only a foot from my forehead, far taller than he had looked from my second-story window.

"Yeah, that's him. He has on the yellow-orange leather jacket, the high-top white tennis shoes and the hooded orange sweat shirt I told you about."

Only now his hood was inside his coat collar. I boldly reached inside his coat and placed the hood on the outside in order to validate my earlier description. Needless to say, this was done while the guy was handcuffed. The cop was either unimpressed by or indifferent to my precision. I wanted to believe that he wasn't the impressionable type.

The short, old-looking, black guy was being detained in the second car. I told the police that he ran with the others but hadn't entered the house. His handcuffs were released. Almost immediately, he began talking about how he was going to get the arresting white officer reprimanded for unjustly stopping him.

"If you're a black man you can't even walk the streets around here without y'all messin' with him. I wasn't even doing nothing and end up getting handcuffed. What about my rights? If I was a white boy y'all woulda strolled right past me. But naw, you saw me and said let's throw that nigger there in jail. Oh yea, I know what the deal is."

Though I knew he had in some way been involved in the theft, it wouldn't occur to me until several days later that he had in fact signaled to the others when it was safe to enter the foyer. Unlike them, he could see the white guys in the backyard. As he was unable to decipher my attitude toward these white guys and whites in general, my mere presence next to him must have delayed, if not threatened, the entire operation.

The short guy continued to "rap." The officer in charge, a stout-faced Irish-American named O'Rourke, began shouting at the short guy, warning him to shut up. A black officer who had just arrived spoke softly to me, as if he too were scared of the Irish cop.

"That guy had betta keep his mouth shut before he gets 'jacked-up.' " I knew that he was referring to the phenomenon that involves the police van making one stop before it reaches the police station. A little "justice" is executed on the suspect's head, away from the crowd, and before the suspect reaches the "safety" of the jail cell. One place for such a stop was behind a vacant mansion near the Yale Divinity School.

The little guy talked louder and louder while the white officer became increasingly angry. The black cop jumped into his car and drove away. I felt trapped between the aggressiveness of the police officer and the stupidity of the black guy. Fortunately, a lieutenant, white of course, arrived on the scene. The aggressive sergeant mentioned to the lieutenant that he felt like "booking" the short guy even though he wasn't a suspect in the crime. The lieutenant rhetorically asked the sergeant on what grounds he could arrest the man since he wasn't doing anything but talking. Relieved, I asked the lieutenant for a cigarette.

The short guy, now free of suspicion, began to use street psychology on me. It was clear that he didn't connect me to the fellow who only three hours earlier had stood next to him and smoked one of his "squares." I had looked then much like one of the locals, and neighborhood folk surely would never call the cops on



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some black dudes in behalf of some white boys. I had clearly "de-ethnicized" my style in the presence of these white police officers, which further kept the short guy from recognizing me.

"The guy in the orange leather coat was definitely not one of those dudes who ran into the house. Naw, it was two other dudes who ran off with them stereos."

"A conflicting testimony, huh?" uttered the lieutenant to the arresting officer.

The short guy continued, occasionally pausing and gesturing to the crowd.

"Yeah, that's right, cause he was out there but he wasn't one of 'em that went in there. I never seen them other dudes before. They must not live round here, but Slim here [pointing to the guy seated in the rear of the cruiser whom I had just identified] lives right down the block and it don't make no sense for him to be taking anything from up here. Now you know that don't make no sense."

Though I had been sure that he was one of the culprits, I was now uncertain. Had I been mistaken? I'm sure that he was standing in front of the house but was he really one of those that went in? Oh, what the hell, I thought, if he wasn't personally guilty, he knew who was.

Here I was, a Yalie, fingering these black and Puerto Rican youths in behalf of some white guys who for all I knew could have been racist as hell. As if to apologize for my behavior, I heard myself tell the black loudmouth that these white guys were friends of mine and that I had known them for a long while. Automatically, I turned on the lingo.

"It just ain't righteous for me to let these young boys rip off these white dudes, man. No bet! If these white boys weren't alright [implying that somehow they weren't racist] then I wouldn't mind, but naw, they're buddies of mine and I ain't gonna let these guys get away with this."

The white guys heard me talking to the short guy and could not understand what I was doing. They didn't make my task any easier, considering the physical distance they kept from me, but I wasn't discovered until their blank stares turned into questions.

"What are you saying? Why did you tell him that? I never saw you before tonight."

From the crowd of onlookers came a rhetorical, "You mean, he don't even know them white boys!" I was trapped again.

The short guy pleaded, "You'd better look again cause you're about to send an innocent man to jail. Jail ain't fit for no man. I know, I spent four years at Sommers [Connecticut's maximum-security prison]. Man, they treat you like dogs."

I really didn't want this young kid to go to jail. All I wanted was the white guys not to have had their stereos ripped off. I knew jails were unfit for any human. I also knew that the cop who was now talking to me in a civil fashion, was in no way my friend. I've seen how racist New Haven cops really are.

On two occasions I've been called "Nigger" by a New Haven cop, once for having the audacity to request the exact hour of the night. "Nigger, do I look like a clock?" was the reply.

The racism of urban police forces is certainly not baffling. Most of the cops are from working-class white ethnic backgrounds, particularly Irish and Italian-American. They see themselves as the enforcers of order. One is never quite sure, however, on whose behalf the order is being enforced, for all of us who live here are suspected of being criminals. This is not one of those neighborhoods where the cops are interested in establishing good community relations. A more representative image is the cop who stands speechless in the middle of the sidewalk staring at everyone who approaches and daring you to brush against him when you walk around him. It's strictly Hollywood macho.

Nor is this to deny the presence of cold-blooded, black hoodlums in this neighborhood. They abound. The crimes of the police could never challenge the crimes of the local thugs. The police do not set houses on fire after breaking into them, nor do they smash 70-year-old ladies in the head with bricks after knocking them to the ground and robbing them of their groceries and Social Security checks.

What's more, nihilistic violence is growing. To hand over one's wallet to a robber is no longer the end of the affair. One might still get shot or maimed. The police have numerous



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reasons for being afraid. That I cannot deny. Neighborhood persons such as myself and disciplined cops such as the lieutenant only confuse the drama and, ultimately, get in the way.

So why was I cooperating with a racist police force? I tried to convince myself that it was not them I was cooperating with, but *Justice.*

Now the sergeant was filing the testimony of the short guy. I was leaning against the police car's front door when one of the victims, who had been seated in the front seat of the police cruiser in which the handcuffed suspect was seated, came over to the seated cop and told him that the suspect had whispered that he would help him get his stereo equipment back if he didn't press charges. I felt relieved. I hadn't been mistaken after all. Yet I was troubled, for surely this kid was on his way to jail.

"Hey brother," the short hipster pleaded, "I don't know, but you say that he's the dude, man, but he ain't one of 'em. I ain't bullshitting either, bro."

The sergeant repeated that we had conflicting testimony. I assumed that he was attempting to trap the short guy, for this little "rap" artist hadn't heard the white guy tell us that the suspect had practically admitted to the crime. After a few minutes of conversation it became clear that the cop wasn't concerned with trapping the short guy. He simply ignored him. He had apprehended a suspect and found someone, in me, who was willing to say that he could positively identify him.

It had now really begun to annoy me that my name, address, and testimony were so recklessly thrown around in front of those I had accused. When the white cops left and the white fellows moved away, I would still have to survive in this neighborhood. The white cops were so caught up with racist assumptions concerning black victimizers that they couldn't suspend them to deal professionally with me, the key to the success of their entire operation. I felt stupid for feeling betrayed. Why had I expected otherwise?

What continues to plague me most about that evening is the moral ambiguity of my actions. By orthodox American mores, I had responded as a responsible citizen. I hadn't shied away from involvement. I should have entertained good feelings. Instead, I wondered if I hadn't been used. Had there been a physical attack on someone, I would not have hesitated to call the New Haven police. I have not yet discovered a convincing argument that would legitimate wanton violence against either affluent or poor persons.

During the late '60s prominent black activists conferred upon those who behaved in an "Up against the wall, motherfucker . . . " fashion the title of revolutionary. The armed robbery of white folks was supposed to be the black man's means of redistributing wealth. This romanticizing of violence did not discriminate between visionaries and thugs. No, I would feel little guilt in aiding the police in the arrest of an assaulter. But nonviolent thefts of deluxe property, I had always argued, were different.

Yet when given the chance to actualize my antiprivate-property leanings, I wilted. Instead, I had worked with a racist and repressive arm of the capitalist state, and on my own initiative.

The pity of it is that much of my action was neither well-reasoned nor principled. At worst I probably didn't think at all, responding instead in knee-jerk fashion as Dick Tracy had taught me. At best, I had acted out of simple self-interest. Had it been my stereo that was stolen, I would have expected any eyewitness to aid the police department. You might ask, on what grounds can the person who steals not justifiably claim socioeconomic distress? I have no rational response, but emotionally I defend my right to give to others only that of my own which I choose to give. More explicitly I defend my freedom to live selfishly, though I think selfish living is unethical.

I had digested a sufficient amount of cant to justify Abby Rockefeller losing her priceless art collection or Diana Ross her wardrobe. They were, it was argued, living so far above subsistence that it was justified, if not mandated, to take from them in the name of poor people everywhere. Only now do I realize that the grandiosity and distance of these justifiable thefts kept me from confronting my emotional attachment to my own property. My leftist intellectual buddies and I could probably cope



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with losing our stereos and television sets, but if someone were to steal our collections of Lukács or Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*, we would be outraged. When I saw those young guys running with the stereos, I must have subconsciously visualized someone riding off with my collection of Monk. The horror registered immediately.

I hesitate to admit the other rationale that influenced my behavior that night. In many respects I acted with the intent of showing these white guys that "all blacks weren't like that."

In offering myself here as a witness I was in no small degree ethnically apologizing for the crime. In doing so, I was in some sense trying to reclaim a sense of black humanity in a neighborhood that seemingly tolerated anything inflicted upon a white person. Though I am quite certain that I would not have acted differently had the victims been black, I would at least have been spared this feeling of ethnic responsibility.

In any case, I acted. The certitude of my theoretical defenses left me at that crucial moment of decision. My antiprivate-property ideology was skin-deep. I acted as many Americans seem to think they would act, and as most seem to think is correct. But my ethical (read ethnic) ambivalences made my actions that night far more complex and anxiety-ridden than I would ever have thought they could be.

Yes, I have seen the racist sergeant since then. I once said hello to him on the street, whereupon he responded with a cold stare as if I were the fool I must have been for speaking. I have seen the suspect I identified on numerous occasions. He has not recognized me for I go nowhere without my ethnic attire. As for the three white guys who live across the street, I never heard a word from them after that night, not even a resigned thank you. They simply moved. I believe that they saw me as a part of the ethnic totality responsible for their trouble. This time, I wasn't surprised. □


dissent **Major Sales Outlets for Our Magazine in New York City:**

BARNES & NOBLE, ANNEX
126 5th Ave. (18th St.)

BARNES & NOBLE
56 W. 9th St.

BRENTANO'S
20 University Place (9th St.)

BRENTANO'S
11 West 47th St.

COLISEUM BOOKS
1771 Broadway (57th St.)

B. DALTON
109 East 42nd St.

EASTERN NEWSSTANDS:
30 Rockefeller Plaza
350 5th Ave.
540 Madison Ave.
200 Park Ave.

EASTSIDE BOOKSTORE
34 St. Mark's Place

ENDICOTT BOOKS
450 Columbus Ave.

HUDSON EMPORIUM
428 Hudson St.

HUDSON STREET PAPERS
581 Hudson St.

HYDE PARK STATIONERS
992 Madison Ave.

IDLE HOURS
59 Greenwich Ave.

THE MAGAZINE STORE
Broadway bet. 62nd & 63rd St.

PAPYRUS BOOKSTORE
2915 Broadway (114th St.)

PARSLEY SAGE, INC.
73 7th Ave. (Barrow)

PERIODIC NEWSSTAND
405 6th Ave.

RADICONE BROS. NEWSSTAND
1 East 42nd St. (5th Ave.)

RUTKIN NEWSSTAND
42nd St. (5th-6th Ave.)

SHAH STATIONERY
2795 Broadway (107th-108th)

ST. MARK'S BOOKSHOP
13 St. Mark's Place

STATE NEWS STORE
1243 3rd Ave.

TRIPLET STATIONERY
401 E. 57th St. (1st Ave.)

WEST FOURTH STREET BOOK STORE 148 West 4th St.

Y.M.C.
7 E. 8th St.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Louis Menand

# Liberalism Without the Imagination

## Some Remarks on Politics and Culture

Let us say that you are the editor of a journal that has a fairly explicit political viewpoint, and you decide that along with articles on political and social issues you want to run some pieces on cultural subjects as well. You can, of course, run essays that criticize books and movies and cultural trends from the perspective of your journal's politics; but let us say that you want to do more than this. You want to enlist literature and the arts in the cause of the political philosophy your journal seeks to promote.

Your motives are not at all mercenary, for you believe—it is, in fact, part of your politics to believe—that culture is not merely the ideological bubbles on the surface of the socioeconomic pot but an expression of values, and that in certain works of art these values find deeper and more complex and powerful expression than the most rigorous political or sociological analysis is capable of. You believe that a wider exposure to and more critical understanding of such works can contribute to a heightened political awareness and a fuller responsiveness to the social issues your journal considers crucial. And you believe, therefore, that in order to espouse a complete politics, your journal needs to raise, alongside the banners of its political philosophy, the standard of a cultural movement. How do you choose an art that matches your politics?

For most of our century, this problem was one that many writers and editors thought it natural to confront and important to solve, and the history of 20th-century intellectual journalism offers a kind of anthology of the ways in which artistic expression can be recruited into the service of social thought.

The inspiration in 1916 and 1917 for that famous mayfly of American letters, *The Seven Arts*, was the lyrical leftism of Randolph Bourne. In the '20s and '30s, readers here and in England were perhaps puzzled by the curious blend of modernist aesthetics and Anglican controversialism featured by T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*—so at times, no doubt, was Eliot—but they tended to assume that it was meant to add up, if only under the aspect of eternity, to a coherent social vision. *Scrutiny*'s hostility to industrial society and mass culture and its nostalgia for a lost rural *Gemeinschaft* were the explicit grounds for its attention to 16th- and 17th-century English poetry and, later, for F. R. Leavis's championship of the tradition of moral realism in the novel from Austen to Lawrence. In this country in the '30s, writers for the *New Masses* like Joseph North read Whitman, Dreiser, and London with the same passion as they read Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

To subscribe to the independent leftism of *Partisan Review* in the '40s and '50s meant a commitment to the experimentalism and the difficulty of high modernism. And in the '60s a magazine sympathetic to the politics of the New Left—*Ramparts*, say, or the *Village Voice*—could be expected to exhibit a lively attentiveness to developments in the nontraditional arts: to film, the living theater, popular music, and so on.[1]

These have been times when, more often than not, a political position implied certain cultural preferences, a constellation of cultural preferences described a politics, and the most complete social philosophy was understood to be the one in which aesthetic values and political tendencies were made responsive to one an-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other. But today the effort to contrive an alliance between politics and culture seems to many people problematic in ways that are new and unsettling. One assumes that *Commentary* will not like the same novels or movies or paintings that the *Nation* likes, and one assumes also that at the bottom of this difference of critical opinion lies a difference of political opinion; but in most cases, the bottom is not a very long way down—in most cases, it's probably only a difference of political opinion.

Edmund Wilson used to complain about the New Humanists Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More that though they had a great deal to say about what literature should and should not be, they could not point to a single contemporary work as the fulfillment of their literary ideal. Those intellectuals today who retain, from their memories of earlier political alignments, some sense of what a socially desirable art ought to look like find themselves in somewhat the same position: can you build a social philosophy on what you find in postmodernist fiction or photorealist painting or, for that matter, New Wave rock? Or, since the process had often worked nicely the other way round, can you adapt any of these movements to the social philosophy you already possess?

It might be objected—it often is—that this state of affairs only reflects the sterility of contemporary culture, the failure of artists and writers to produce the kind of art and literature that used to change the lives of the men and women they touched. But when one looks back at the history of 20th-century efforts to yoke culture and politics to the same ideological cart, one is apt to feel that the results have not usually been happy. One is even apt to feel that it was frequently not the politics but the art that made the trouble.

Let's take an example. The classic case of the union of cultural taste and political viewpoint—the case from which, I think, much of our present uneasiness derives—is the attraction modernist literature had for liberal intellectuals, and its locus is *Partisan Review*. This attraction makes for a paradox. To put it simply: viewed as a form of cultural criticism, modernism was reactionary and antidemocratic, and a number of its major figures—Eliot, Pound, Yeats, and Lawrence—(not to mention such minor associates as T. E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis) shared an assortment of political tendencies that included anti-Semitism, profascist sympathies, and various kinds of often wildly anachronistic elitist social theories.

Viewed as a collection of aesthetic objects, modernist literature was difficult and allusive, tending to promote a mandarin idea of culture; introspective, tending to induce an attitude of resignation and cultivated despair; formally intricate, tending to derogate the importance of the content of art in favor of its purely aesthetic achievements; and deliberately ambiguous, ironic, and self-reflexive, suggesting, when translated into political thinking, the inadequacy of any program of reform that has as its basis a rational plan for social change. Yet this was the literature most admired by many people whose politics were activist, progressive, socialist, democratic.

This paradox is observed frequently enough to seem a very old story. But, as two books published last year remind us, it is a story whose moral has somehow been lost in the retelling. The two books I have in mind are William Barrett's *The Truants*, a memoir of his association with *Partisan Review*, and Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, an ambitious and, I think, very uneven attempt to promote modernist culture as a way of understanding, and even changing, the modern world. Taken together, these books spell out an interesting fact: modernist culture, which for years served with equal willingness both the regressive politics of the New Critics and such liberal-left enterprises as *Partisan Review*, is today a culture that, from a political point of view, no one seems to know quite what to do with.

William Barrett's *The Truants*, as well as being a useful and at moments engaging memoir of the author's friendship with some of the figures involved with *Partisan Review*, is a diatribe against intellectual vanity and the sort of absolutist values it breeds. These values are epitomized for Barrett in what he calls "the two M's" of the *Partisan* manifesto, Marxism and modernism. The contradictions between



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these ideologies went unexamined, according to Barrett, because their adherents were drawn to those special gratifications of intellectual self-esteem Marxism shared with modernism: contempt for the bourgeoisie, a rationale for the necessity of an elite intellectual advance guard, faith in the powers of an absolute agent —the march of the dialectic, the primacy of the artistic imagination.[2]

Barrett's diagnosis, applicable alike to the high fever of Philip Rahv and the mild but persistent discontent of Lionel Trilling, is a want of the religious sense, and he prescribes accordingly. There is little point, it seems to me, in arguing with those who would see the whole history of secular thought as one vast substitution for an absent living faith: all their trump cards are in a suit you do not hold. But Barrett's dismissal of modernism as another form of truancy is worth pausing over.

I have said that *Partisan Review* was the house of critical thought that liberal-left politics and modernist culture occupied uneasily together, but I do not mean to suggest, as Barrett does suggest, that the magazine's editors and contributors were blind to the incongruities between their politics and cultural modernism that are now so apparent, or that they undertook any sort of programmatic application of the values of modernist literature to the discussion of social and political issues.

By late 1937, when *Partisan Review* broke away from its association with the New York John Reed Club and what the editors called "the senseless disciplines of the official [Communist] left," most of its contributors thought modernism a thing of the past. The magazine's real commitment, the essential ingredient of its cultural politics, was to the spirit of the avant-garde in literature and the arts, which it sought to rescue from the critical repressiveness of party-line Marxism. The modernist culture of the early 20th century was understood to have provided the impetus for this spirit, and writers for the magazine naturally looked to it for the kind of urgency, complexity, and adversarial attitude they wished to promote in contemporary culture.

This reading of literary modernism as a sanctioning body for a perpetual avant-gardism is, I think. fundamentally inaccurate, but it helps to explain Barrett's neoconservative position on modernism. A neoconservative was once a liberal; he subscribed to this idea of modernism as an authorization for experimentalism in art and thus was an ally of radicalism in politics, and it therefore follows for him that responsibility for all the follies of the avant-garde is to be laid at modernism's door. The notion that modernism is somehow responsible for Timothy Leary, Happenings, and the trashing of ROTC offices yields this version of the history of ideas in *The Truants*: "As the pursuit of novelty went on, the restraining barriers of taste became less and less visible. The disturbed decade of the 1960s, with its squalid atmosphere of permissiveness, descended upon us, and the spirit of 'Anything goes!' was in the air."

Marshall Berman's response to such high-minded petulance about the '60s indicates succinctly the nature of his political differences with Barrett (though Berman has Daniel Bell in mind here): "It is modern capitalism, not modern art and culture, that has set and kept the pot boiling—reluctant as capitalism may be to face the heat." If Barrett is repentant, Berman is unreconstructed: his inspiration is the young Marx, and *The Communist Manifesto* becomes, in his scheme, along with Goethe's *Faust*, Baudelaire's *Paris Spleen*, Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman," and Dostoevsky's *The Underground Man*, one of the sacred texts of modern literature.

The purpose of Berman's extended discussion of these works sounds like the old *Partisan* two M's:

> A fusion of Marxism with modernism should melt the too-solid body of Marxism—or at least warm it up and thaw it out—and, at the same time, give modernist art and thought a new solidity and invest its creations with an unsuspected resonance and depth. It would reveal modernism as the realism of our time.

But Berman makes a number of significant alterations on the *Partisan* model. His idea of an exemplary modernism is limited to those texts—all of them from the 19th century—that



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he can represent as having entered into a dialectical struggle with the modernizing forces of capitalism, and the closer the text gets to these forces, the better suited it becomes for Berman's program. Thus *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, the poetry of Yeats, and the novels of Woolf and Beckett do not figure at all in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, because they are—too airy. "One of the fundamental problems of twentieth-century modernism," Berman writes, "is the way art tends to lose touch with people's everyday lives."

At this point, the argument of *All That Is Solid* begins to sound like one we have heard before from writers on the left—in Georg Lukács's defense of the bourgeois novel, for instance, and even in the book that was for many the introduction to literary modernism, Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle*. Nineteenth-century literature, this argument has it, was engaged, its interplay of artistic form and social actuality was deep, complex, dialectical. Twentieth-century literature is detached, introverted, too finely wrought. It is consequently, as Berman declares, "remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century [that] can give us the courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first."

But this is not the end of the story. What is 21st-century modernism to look like? Berman's prescription is neither for the realist tradition endorsed by Lukács nor for the kind of engaged literary enterprise that for Wilson was personified by the work of Shaw. Berman's preference is for what might be called a "low" modernism: he proposes an art that is experimental, formally flexible, spontaneous, responsive to the modern environment—all the things that 20th-century high modernism, while appearing at first glance to sponsor, was, as he is perfectly aware, completely opposed to.

The animating idea of 20th-century modernism had been, after all, the idea of tradition: art was understood to be the repository of the society's values, and modernism's promise for many readers during the first half of this century was to make art and literature the forums for the arbitration of human values in a world that was rapidly being overrun by the inhuman—by technological blight, monopoly capitalism, faceless bureaucracy.

But Berman is suspicious of these claims for high culture: he wants art, but not Art. The model for contemporary artistic creation in *All That Is Solid* is the public sculpture on which handbills have been plastered and graffiti spray-painted—an object barely noticed as art at all, but which can direct us, when we choose to register it as part of our experience, to the counterplay of creative liberation and mindless destruction that for Berman characterizes modern life.

Berman's example is a sculpture by Richard Serra, called *TWU*, which stands just off Canal Street in lower Manhattan:

> It consists of three immense steel rectangles, each about ten feet across and about thirty-five feet high, aligned like a jagged "H." It is as solid as sculpture can get, yet ghostly in several ways: its capacity to change shapes, depending on our point of view; its metamorphoses of color, luminous bronze gold at one angle or moment, turning an ominous leaden gray a brief moment or movement away; its evocation of the steel skeletons of all the skyscrapers around it, of the dramatic skyward thrust that modern architecture and engineering made possible, of the expressive promise that all these buildings once made during their brief skeletal phase, but that most of them blatantly betrayed once they were complete.
>
> . . . This work is located a little off the beaten path, but its presence has begun to create a new path, drawing people magnetically into its orbit. Once there, they look, touch, lean, nestle, sit. Sometimes they insist on participating more actively in the work, and inscribe their names or beliefs on its sides—"NO FUTURE" was recently inscribed in letters three feet high; in addition, the lower facades have turned into something of a kiosk, decked with innumerable pleasant and unpleasant signs of the times.
>
> Some people are angry at what seems to them the desecration of a fine work of art. It seems to me, however, that all that the city has added to *TWU* has brought out its special depths, which would never have emerged if it had lain untouched.

As a prescription for contemporary art, this is, I think, an honest recommendation—though I find it, like many of Berman's critical discussions, more wishful than analytic[3]—and its insistence that the artist grant the modern



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world some degree of acceptance is attractive. But it is also a pretty thorough undoing of the notion of an autonomous, highly developed, fiercely adversary work of art that had figured in the old *Partisan* ideal.

Where do these two books leave our hypothetical editor? From the right, he hears warnings that avant-gardism will lead to intellectual absolutism and the demon Excess; from the left, a recommendation for a kind of aesthetic jungle gym, at its best merely a focus for energies not exactly critical or activist in nature. What has happened to the idea of a high culture united to an enlightened and progressive politics? And, given this degree of disenchantment with that idea, what sort of role can art and literature be expected to play in the future of social thought?

A lot of people are prepared to blame criticism for the present state of affairs. Critical thought, they tell us, is so entangled in its own theoretical weaving and deconstructing that it has forgotten what a socially useful art—not to mention a socially useful criticism—looks like. And they offer us the names of the great cultural critics of the recent past, meant to recall criticism to its modern promise. Leavis, Wilson, Trilling—here, we are told, was a criticism undistracted by doctrinal politics, a criticism doggedly antitheoretical. A criticism like theirs might make it possible to speak once again, and without irony, of art in the context of what used to be called "the moral life."

But when we look to these figures so insistently commended to our attention, we are not likely to feel fortified. F. R. Leavis, faithful as he was to the idea of a socially informed criticism, always seemed to represent the less attractive aspects of Matthew Arnold's idea of culture: always narrowing the scope of critical discourse, forever turning a new aesthetic experience into a cultural "tradition," perpetually barking at every postman bringing news of Progress. Leavis's liberal admirers—and there have been a good number on this side of the Atlantic—used to assure doubters that when the sounds of parochial battle died away, Leavis's criticism would stand in its true light as a champion of culture's fiercely independent challenge to modern materialism in all its most dehumanizing manifestations. But when we see the resurrection of Leavisite principles in a forum for the same kind of beware-the-dog thinking such as *The New Criterion*, we have to wonder whether the regressive social policies promoted by *Scrutiny* were not after all inseparable from its critical posture.

Lionel Trilling, too, stuck to his texts, but his discouragement with the notion of literature as a source of human value can be easily read in the shape of his career. The hope of *The Liberal Imagination* (1950)—with its confidence that literature as "the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty," has something to teach liberal politics—is answered by the suspicion of *Beyond Culture* (1965) that art—especially but not exclusively modern art—"does not always tell the truth or the best kind of truth and does not always point out the right way, that it can even generate falsehood and habituate us to it." The argument yields finally a book that has at its heart a quarrel with the values of much of the major literature of the past 200 years, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972). Trilling's last, unfinished essay proposes a reading of Jane Austen's novels using the methods of an anthropologist.

The case of the most identifiably liberal of the three is the least equivocal. After managing to keep his critical head above the rough literary-political water of the '30s and '40s, Edmund Wilson ultimately lost interest in the major works of the Anglo-American tradition —including the modernism he had earlier devoted most of his critical energies to—and spent the last 20 years of his life studying the largely second-rate literature of the American Civil War and the literatures of such minor cultures as Haiti's, Canada's, and the American Indian's. At the end of his life, Wilson was teaching himself Hungarian.

The lesson of these critical careers is in fact the lesson of Barrett and Berman: if you maintain your moral and political standards for art, you will find yourself continually narrowing the range of art you can admire and take an interest in; and if you wish to be able to take an interest in any sort of art, you will eventually



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have to stop worrying about its political usefulness.

The old idea of art as something that will stand still long enough for you to attach a set of moral or social values to has clearly been subject to a lot of pressure in the past 20 years or so. Much of this pressure has come from the social sciences, which see culture as a value-free play of symbols, simply one of the ways the members of a social group give meaning to their activities, but as something without inherent capacity to change their lives for the better. In this nonprescriptive light, the study of art can yield insight and understanding, but it cannot yield reliable political values. And for the process of understanding, *any art will do.* Art has become simply one of the signifiers in the empire of human signification, and though it may help to tell us where we are, it will not tell us how to get to any of the places we want to be.

The best course for the editor of the journal of "politics and the arts" in this state of affairs, it seems to me, is to abandon the effort to get the cultural criticism of the magazine back to marching arm in arm with the social criticism. This doesn't mean abandoning the cultural criticism—only letting it wander where it will, in the hope that no matter what aesthetic object its attention lights on, it will find something interesting to say. For art, too, has changed its self-conception, and it is clear that art in the future—whatever sort of art it is, whatever sort of future it is—will have a different social status from the status it has enjoyed for much of the past century, and one of the privileges it will have lost is its intimacy with political vision.

## Notes

[1] *Ramparts* is gone, but the *Voice* lingers on. Here is Robert Christgau, in the July 6, 1982 issue: "I love rock and roll because, unlike literature, it's not caught in the cerebral, self-referential, and ultimately defeatist cul-de-sac of highbrow modernism. Physical and popular, it points the way out of (or at least waves at) a cultural dilemma in which only prodigious feats of deep feeling can achieve the political and economic equality the world depends on."

[2] I have had to interpolate a little here, though I don't think I have misrepresented Barrett's views. Barrett's distrust of ratiocination in this book is so profound that he rarely indulges in extended argument. This is the sort of thing the reader must sometimes endure: in the middle of a very brief explanation of the theory of color-field abstraction—"Art wearied, reader, of all this cerebration? Take heart, just a few steps further, and we shall have done. We would have spared you if we could, but modern art is so overgrown with the liana vines of ideology that we cannot try to hack a clearing through the jungle without getting just a little entangled in the creepers."

[3] Berman's critical benevolence is appealing, but I think he has misread his cultural signifiers here. The slogan "NO FUTURE" is not a piece of spontaneous creativity inspired by Serra's sculpture, but the chorus line of the Sex Pistols' punk classic, "God Save the Queen." The Sex Pistols' music is a good example of what Robert Warshow used to call *Lumpen* culture—the culture of people who hate culture—and as such the graffito was probably directed not, as Berman seems to think, against the modern environment but against the elitist pretensions of the sculpture itself. Berman sometimes appears to forget that although art can be one of the things that bring people together, it is also often one of the things that keep them apart. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sanford Schwartz

# I Walked with Intellectuals

William Barrett's *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals* (Anchor/Doubleday, 1982) is a slippery and maddening book. It is an account of one man's intellectual coming of age, and it has the qualities of a backward glance at a busy, crisscrossed time. But it is also a subtle, unceasing—and, the reader may feel, not always conscious—attack on that time.

Barrett recalls the days when, in the late 1940s and early '50s, he worked for the formidable Philip Rahv and the somewhat more retiring William Phillips, the founders and editors of *Partisan Review*. Barrett had been a pal of Delmore Schwartz's before the war, when Schwartz, then in his early twenties, was achieving renown in New York literary circles for his stories and poetry. When Barrett returned from active duty overseas, he picked up his friendship with Schwartz, who had become a figure at *Partisan Review*. As Barrett tells it, Schwartz came to him one day, and, in a scene that might be an illustration of the title of Schwartz's best-known story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," told him, without any prior word that this might happen, that he was now on the staff of the magazine. Barrett doesn't say much about this except that he was surprised, and that he accepted. He and Schwartz became associate editors, working under Rahv and Phillips, and for the next seven-odd years he was at or near the center of the quarterly that was left-wing in its politics, "modernist" in its literary values, and, by general consent, the most influential intellectual magazine, certainly in those years, in the United States. He left in the beginning of 1952, at the age of thirty-nine, when differences with the editors, as friends and colleagues, made him feel it was time to move on.

A former professor of philosophy at New York University, William Barrett might, as a writer, be called a portraitist of ideas. In his best-known work, *Irrational Man*, a study of existentialism and its historical background, and in *Time of Need* and *The Illusion of Technique*, he presents ideas as they are embodied in biographical details and in works of literature and art as well as in formal studies of philosophy. *The Truants* moves back and forth in a fluid, unchronological way, weaving together recollections of moments in the life of the magazine with descriptions of the eminent European writers who came to New York after the war and of the Abstract Expressionist painters and their milieu. Embedded in the flow of recollections are studies of Rahv, Schwartz, Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, Clement Greenberg, Hannah Arendt, James Burnham, and Sidney Hook as thinkers and writers. Barrett is a knowing judge of how the reputations of those he knew from his *Partisan Review* days have worn, and he has obviously enjoyed re-creating the sound of their voices, the way they moved, the lively cracks they made at each other's expense. Yet these people have a balsa-wood lightness. They seem defanged, too easily summarized. You wonder if they have become as musty as Barrett makes them, and you also wonder how much he wants to write about them. His tone is that of a TV talk-show host who looks over his guest's shoulder at his audience and winks, as if to say, "We'll just bother with this one a little longer."

*The Truants* leaves you with the grayed feeling that the immediate postwar era in New York was a time of fussing and bickering, mistakes and delusions, when everyone got it wrong somehow. What you take away, though, isn't a sense of loss or of a wasted period in Barrett's life; what you keep is a fishier feeling about why someone should smilingly dish his intellectual youth. Barrett sees the writers he came to maturity with as part of a grand design that encompasses American culture to this day. He believes they are somehow responsible for much of what he alludes to as the impoverishment and glibness of recent life. Yet he never goes at them directly. When he points out the foibles, philosophic inconsistencies, and wrecked hopes of his influential friends, he does it in the spirit of a public-relations spokesman, someone who carefully presses his hands together and informs us that this is, unfortunately, an imperfect world and everything we do will mirror our flawed condition. But he presents himself as scarless and contented.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Barrett is aware that he has ambivalent feelings —especially about Philip Rahv, who struck him as a secretive, egocentric, truculent, but also somehow weak and vacillating man, full of angers and hatreds that followed him like a black cloud and kept Barrett at a distance. Barrett wants us to know that Rahv would have understood, respected, and wanted nothing less than Barrett's owning up to his ambivalence. Yet his ambivalence hasn't given him insights—it is simply the bind he is in. From the little he tells us of his own feelings at the time, the reader senses that Barrett, whether out of duty, respect, or fear, didn't say or do what he wanted when he was in the company of Rahv and the others. He presents himself as something of an invisible, frustrated, but obliging, gentlemanly outsider, and that is the vantage point he still has. You don't question the sincerity of the praise he offers Rahv and the others, but you don't feel that the praise goes deep, either. It's showy, flourishful. He has dedicated his memoir "For Delmore and Philip, restless shades," and his opening chapter, on Rahv, is entitled "Prologue: A Mass for the Dead." He tells "dear Philip" that *The Truants* is but a "poor wreath" placed on "your grave." The way he puts it, every time he lays a wreath he gets a go-ahead to dispense some more constructive criticism. But the inner check that makes him pay lip service also keeps him from being truly caustic, withering. If he were openly in conflict, he might seem more honest, and we might respect him more.

Attempting to justify his fault-finding tone, he says, "Our charity is needed more by the living, who are still struggling to cope with things, and who are easily upset by any disobliging remark. And when can one try to be candid about other people except when they are not listening?" But this waiting-for-later policy backfires on him. If someone gives the living "charity" instead of honest talk, and if someone waits for people to be gone before he can be "candid" about them, it's possible that he will always be thinking and feeling in a woozy, delayed, unspontaneous way. It's possible, too, that he will have a sense of anger inside him that will grow as time goes on and that will always come out muffled. That is the effect of *The Truants*, where you frequently don't know whose side Barrett is on, or whose interest he thinks he's serving.

There is the story of E. M. Forster's visit to New York. The English writer arrived with a person whose name Barrett has not thought worth looking up; this man is labeled Forster's "boyfriend, a London policeman." A meeting with Forster was arranged for Trilling, Forster's foremost critic in the United States and the author of an influential study of him. The meeting—Barrett got this story at the time from Rahv—took place at an "apartment-loft somewhere downtown in the East Village in the midst of a party of homosexuals," and Trilling, so the tale goes, was shocked and dismayed to see Forster in this company. The reader pulls back and is embarrassed, too, not only for Trilling and Forster but for Barrett, because there is something unseemly in his avid desire to recollect Trilling's embarrassment and in the way he mangles Forster in the process. "Trilling's beloved idol came on simply as an elderly queen camping all over the place," Barrett writes, unmindful of how he presents himself through his use of words. He goes on about how people at the time didn't have any knowledge of Forster's homosexuality and about how shocking, to him at least, were the reports of the novelist's behavior. He makes the requisite distinctions between the works Forster was then known for, which have no overt homosexual content, and the writings published later, where he tackled homosexual themes, and which are lesser works. But then, in the cold, tone-deaf language of a supermarket celebrity tabloid, he returns to the "great gulf" between Forster's well-known novels and "the spectacle of the aging queen turning on in public." Why was the moment recreated? To give us a taste of Philip Rahv's gossipiness? To show how people can humiliate one another? Barrett's unthinking enjoyment in recounting the gossip nullifies the story as we read it.

Barrett has a schoolteacher's instinct for spotting mistakes of fact and logic; he likes to correct, and you feel that he does this without being malicious, that he isn't fully aware of the effect he leaves. He is in Rome during the last days of the war, serving in the Army, and receives a call one day from Edmund Wilson, who is there picking up atmosphere and information for a series of articles for the *New Yorker* on conditions in Italy. Barrett describes how Wilson goes to Milan at one point and sees a sign in a bookshop window saying "Socialist books are not sold here," and takes that as evidence that the political right is gaining ground in the north. Barrett, who has couched this story in a series of impressions of Wilson that leave the reader feeling that Wilson was pompous and self-centered and that his famous flair for languages and facts could not always be trusted, happens to be sent to Milan a few days after Wilson returns. Curious, Barrett goes to the bookshop to see the sign, and it turns out that Wilson's Italian is faulty. The sign says "scholastic," not "socialist," books. "Months later," Barrett tells us, "when I



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was back in the United States, I looked up an old *New Yorker*, and, sure enough, Wilson was telling its readers that rightist sentiment was running so high in Milan that bookstores would not sell socialist books."

Barrett wants to set the historical record straight but he doesn't get the cleansed feeling he seeks. Why, we ask, didn't he alert Wilson at the time that the Italian was mistranslated? And if Barrett wasn't able to get to Wilson before the article appeared in the magazine, why didn't he tell Wilson of his mistake thereafter, so that it would not be repeated when Wilson included his article in a book? Barrett wants to put finishing touches on past history, but he himself is loose with facts. He tells us that during those days in Italy he drew Wilson's attention to the case of the Russian refugees in Rome. The refugees feared that the Allies would allow Soviet officials to come through the camps and send them back to the Soviet Union. Barrett thought the subject would be of interest to Wilson, but Wilson, whom he has been portraying as someone who only "saw what he wanted to see," didn't, Barrett says, pursue the subject. But Wilson did. He described the situation—and the fact that it was Barrett who drew his attention to it—in *Europe Without Baedeker* (1947).

Though Barrett sprinkles some diplomatic compliments in the paths of the people he's writing about, he never gives them the true laurel. Of all his subjects, he has the most praise for Trilling as a writer. But he never pulls out the stops and says unequivocally that these men and women at one time or another wrote great criticism. He doesn't give the reader the remotest sense of how rich American criticism was then. He doesn't give an idea of how varied and packed almost every single issue of *Partisan Review* was, or even how the magazine, as an object, looked. It might be said that there was more energy in criticism at the time Barrett is writing about than in any art form except painting or perhaps poetry. Few novels of the time have the twisting, raw but precise declarations of feeling, the lively scorn and enthusiasm for daily life, and the lyrical appreciation for earlier American and European personalities and social conventions of the critical writing—contributed by full-time critics, philosophers, poets, novelists, and historians—that found its way into *Partisan Review* and other small magazines. Possibly this was because for many Americans who came of age in the '40s there was no better, more immediate way to do justice to the new themes and awarenesses that presented themselves than through criticism. For writers who had grown up in the Depression, criticism was also the most apt place to insist that art be no more important than the most crucial issues of life. One of Philip Rahv's most famous essays is "The Heiress of All the Ages," which might be called an ode, in the form of literary analysis, to Henry James's heroines. Rahv wrote about James's vision, which grew grander over the years, of the American girl as the figure who would come to be the rightful inheritor of "all the ages" of European refinement. In many ways, Rahv was writing about himself and his contemporaries—not only among the critics. They felt themselves to be the heirs of Europe's fortune. At least as early as right after the First World War, Americans sensed that they would take on the mantle of Europe, and journalists wondered when New York would become the new Paris. But it was the generation of the '40s that felt the weight of the new cultural and political adulthood sitting on its head.

It was a fragile, self-conscious, and belligerent generation—maybe because it felt it had lived through the death of Europe and knew that the time had come for it to prove itself. These qualities are perhaps most vivid in the Abstract Expressionist paintings, where tenuous and delicate feelings are spread over great expanses of canvas—where the painters seem to be saying that they want to be monumental and are willing to work in the grandest of European manners, and where they also show, in the marks they make on the canvases, their frightened and impatient awareness of what it means to take on so much. The combination of fragility and headstrong, argumentative strength is also there in the thrusting quality of the writing. Barrett speaks for many people when he presents the "New York Intellectual" of those days so skeptically. There is something forbidding and steely cold about many of these personalities and their work. Whether in Meyer Schapiro's art lectures and writing, Saul Bellow's novels, or Mary McCarthy's theater reviews, ideas were made to live, ideological enemies were knifed brilliantly, and we were left convinced that no aspect of the world's history was foreign to these buoyant warriors. What wasn't wonderful was the feeling that the warrior was showing off.

Barrett, though, never goes into whether these people, in their work, can irritate—or excite—us. He is too determined to present them to us as bulls led this way and that by the ideological rings in their noses. He keeps worrying the issue of how the figures he came to maturity with did or did not give themselves to their respective faiths—Rahv to Marx, Trilling to Freud, Greenberg to Kant and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"historical inevitability" in the development of art styles. He faults Rahv for his "simple and comprehensive explanation of the world, above all *unquestioned*, so that it could have the redeeming stability of religious faith." But elsewhere he slaps Rahv because "his mind was not logical but intuitive—and sometimes intuitive according to his own devious patterns." (Barrett's preference is for predictable intuition.) What he doesn't get is that while many of the most brilliant historians, essayists, poets, and painters of the period may have been drawn to one ideology or another, or may even have been ideologues (as he calls Rahv), ideology does not sum up the work they produced. He wants us to see Rahv, Greenberg, and Trilling as fogged in by ideology, forced to forget the realities of life and to misconstrue the novels, paintings, and poems they wrote about. But he never goes deeper, to see why this generation, in so many different guises, needed Marx—or Freud or the concept of "historical inevitability"—to set its hopes on, or how those overriding ideas were the catalytic agents for perceptions about art and literature that have their own life, and don't necessarily make us think, when we read them, of the ideas that fed them.

Trying to create a gap between the supposedly idea-bound writing of his intellectual companions and the art and literature they were drawn to, Barrett subtly belittles those subjects. His chapter entitled "The Painters' Club" is an intimate view of some of the Abstract Expressionists at the moment before their reputations were made. He tells us he called the Eighth Street hangout generally known as the Club the Painters' Club, because that made it easier for his "literary friends" when he was talking about his downtown visits. He still sees it as a relief from the *Partisan Review* world. "No doubt," he says, "my intellectual friends would have found many of the ideas of the painters crude or naive; but then the suspicion was beginning to dawn on me that the way that the intellectuals looked at things might not be the only or in all cases the best way of looking." He likes remembering the art scene and the Greenwich Village of those days as an American "Vie de Bohème." The artists "had yet to make their big splash before the world and they were not rich." As he presents it, it was a time of much jitterbugging and robust thoughts. Willem de Kooning looks at "the work of the old masters with the wonderful directness and energy of a child," and, more than once, Barrett has him responding to some supposedly profound formulation about the new American painting with "Gee!"

The reader believes that Barrett genuinely liked the Club and that he was especially fond of de Kooning and Franz Kline (Jackson Pollock, as Barrett saw him, tended to be either dead silent or on the verge of eruption or drunk and loutish); but he never says anything about the work of these artists. What he wants to remember is that in the good old days they were blissful, poor, unencumbered by dealers and reputations, and, perhaps best of all, living refutations, in their heartiness and simplicity, of the ideas that Clement Greenberg and, later, Harold Rosenberg, foremost among others, would see embodied in their art. Barrett's reader is informed that after the artists began making money the blissful days ceased, and some of the figures, de Kooning in particular, began drinking heavily. The reader is not informed that it was at this time—in the late '40s and early '50s—that almost all of the Abstract Expressionists were finding their most distinctive and original styles. It was the classic moment for Kline and Pollock and, possibly, for de Kooning, too, and also for artists Barrett does not mention: Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman. Each man's time of exploration and indecision was now over, and in these years they were making the first and still most fresh-looking examples of the paintings that would give American art its first international renown. Barrett's position is that these men—or at least de Kooning and Kline—were always warm and simple but fame somehow ruined everything. "The subsequent history of the New York School was to be, at least in part, an indecent traffic with ideas, in the course of which it is really remarkable that some good painting managed to get done," he announces, not making it clear if the "traffic with ideas" stood in the way of the later development of the Abstract Expressionists or if this traffic got in the way of the "New York School" art that came after them. He certainly isn't interested in anything that followed the A. E.s; he dismisses each succeeding style as another empty trick.

If Barrett leaves us confused as to when artists began to be weighed down by ideas, it's possibly because he doesn't want to raise the question of what his Club friends did or did not achieve. Essentially, he thinks about them only as a foil to the gossipy, analytical-minded, cynical literary intellectuals. It never occurs to him that the painters shared any of the ideas or aspirations of Greenberg or Rosenberg or of writers who weren't interested in the visual arts—Rahv, for instance. He isn't prepared to see in de Kooning's work something more furious and frustrated than "Gee!" Nor does he want to imagine de Kooning's naiveté and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

childlike directness as possibly the response of a very canny and learned man, though that has occurred to many who have known and written about the painter, and it is felt in his recorded remarks and sly, witty statements about painting.

Barrett talks about going with a friend to a young painter's studio in the mid-'50s and finding her disconsolate about her work (which Barrett thinks is "not without its merits"), because she feels it may not add anything to "*Painting*." He takes the scene as an example of the deadly influence of critical thought, which had then already filtered down from the desks of writers such as Greenberg and Rosenberg, to destroy instincts in the studio. Greenberg's influence on new art was vast in the '50s and for much of the '60s; but, contrary to Barrett's feeling, most good artists, from any era, are aware of where their medium is, especially when they're on the verge of finding what's individual about themselves; like rising young writers, lawyers, and politicians, they think a lot about where they fit in, and how they can advance their enterprise. Greenberg didn't invent the idea of an ongoing tradition in art, he revitalized it for his time; his ideas developed at the same pace, and with the same backtrackings, as the most difficult new art of the '40s, and his opinions and formulations may have given these artists an incentive to keep growing. His ideas about what qualities make for world-historical art did harden and become simplified, and a school of painters (accompanied by dealers, critics, and museum curators) did come into being in the wake of those ideas, because, in the beginning at least, the ideas were irresistible to many people, including people of great talent. But a greater number of later artists rejected Greenberg, and found themselves by going around his path—and the path of the Abstract Expressionists.

*The Truants* seems to lead up to the pages, toward the very end, where Barrett takes on Rahv's work as a critic. When Barrett writes about Rahv's essays you feel that there is finally a floor under Barrett, something his opinions can be judged against. He has been telling us that Rahv's political pieces are strident Marxist mouthings, and that, given the barest opportunity, Rahv, in conversation, would gleefully analyze people's motives to shreds. The "best part of him," we are told, is in his essays about literature; and then Barrett goes on to whittle away at those essays. He leaves the reader feeling that, while Rahv was important because many of his ideas have been picked up by teachers of literature, those ideas have the weight of very debatable notions. The most he can say for Rahv's piece on Franz Kafka, which appears as the introduction to the Modern Library edition of Kafka's stories and has for long been the essay most people know this author by, is that it is "fine." Handing down a B+ on Rahv's "Tolstoy: The Green Twig and the Black Trunk," he declares that it is "one of the best short introductions" to Tolstoy "as a writer."

Reading Rahv now can be a little difficult, partly because his ideas about 19th-century and modern literature have become so widely accepted that they don't seem as if they were ever his own, partly because he doesn't spend time trying to re-create the texture of the writer he is presenting. He is invariably in the thick of the most important distinctions from the first paragraph. Barrett tells us that Rahv was obsessed with Edmund Wilson, and it is easy to see why—Rahv wanted to be an august critic. Yet he couldn't move with Wilson's limberness and command from one subject to another. You can tell that he didn't enjoy writing, and it rarely feels as if he discovered things about himself as he wrote. Yet his writing is personal. It has its own blend of tortuousness and velocity. He must be read slowly for his ideas to be absorbed, yet the effect of his sentences is of a great freight train hurtling by.

Rahv is often "judicial," as Barrett calls him, but he wasn't ever "judicious," which Barrett also says


dissent

**ARE YOU MOVING?**

•

Second-class publications are *not* forwarded by your Post Office, but returned (at senders' expense) to be repackaged and reshipped: . . . *Three postage payments, for us, plus weeks of delay*. . . .

To avoid this, and help DISSENT, *please notify us one month in advance of your change of address*. Send both old and new address to:

•

DISSENT, 521 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10017




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he was. ("Judicious" is the tone Barrett must believe he achieves.) There is a sense of crowding and nervousness and an awareness of what others may think behind Rahv's words; he fights hard, as a writer, for his big view. He was known for his devotion to Russian 19th-century literature, especially to Dostoevski and Tolstoy, who gave him his best opportunity to describe the profusion of social and psychological tensions that he felt the biggest characters in literature had to be visited by. The Russia of his articles and portraits is in part the fantasy Russia that many Americans have long carried in their minds. It is the country of undiluted soul feelings, the place where happiness is always mixed with a sense of the painfulness and emptiness of things. Wanting always to sum up the combative, beleaguered, and lonely position of the modern man, his pieces sometimes have the effect of being pressurized, miniaturized Russian novels—ones where all the action is conveyed in a rambling but relentless conversation between two men during the course of a stifling St. Petersburg night. When he is dismissive and curt, he is Russian, too. When he writes to sweep away the false views of other critics or to say how some novelist isn't truly modern, he seems to be facing the tundra as he puts the words down. There is a grinding anger to him then; he really feels that he is looking at a vast nothing, that the figure he is writing about is bad for culture and life and that we will be led astray by admiring or believing in him.

Rahv couldn't be Edmund Wilson because, for all that he may have wanted to speak with fluency and with the assurance, as he might have put it, of a landowner from one of the old families, he realized he had to be a writer of one thing, which was large and small: the endless trial of being modern. Barrett tells us that Rahv had no interest in or comprehension of the new American painting of the time, and the reader has no cause to doubt him. Yet Rahv was very close to the Abstract Expressionists in his feelings, especially Rothko and Newman—Rothko in the way he turns the great modern writers into mammoth far-reaching essences that hover before us, Newman in the way his determination to deal only with the largest issues often left his world stripped of texture, barren. These painters, too, wanted their work to stand for one magnified thing; they knew that their art might become severe and flat in the process, but they wanted to run the risk. The risk almost seemed to be the point.

When Rahv died he left his money to Israel, an act that Barrett says "puzzled many," presumably because Rahv hadn't been known for Zionist sympathies or for being pro-Israel. Barrett wasn't surprised, though, because years before, in a conversation in Washington Square, when Rahv had been talking about the "tepidness" of life in America, he impetuously said he wished he were in Israel. Barrett sees Rahv's will as a sign that, at the end, "something more human than literary . . . broke through," and that there was something "more youthful and yearning" underneath Rahv's "cynical postures of the ideologue." Barrett's is a legitimate way of interpreting what Rahv did. But from another point of view this interpretation makes mush out of Rahv's spirit. It takes the punch out of his gesture, which says "Screw you" to America, and "So you think you know everything about me?" to his friends and public.

Rahv's unexpected parting gift to Israel also has something in it of the flaunting and wrenched farewells by suicide of many of the writers and painters of the time. For the generation of the '40s, everything led up to the grand, confounding gesture, whether in one's work or life. It expressed the trapped feeling so many had about their situation in history, and also their wanting to break loose from that entrapment. They wanted to be the new American creators, men without a past, and they also felt themselves to be the last true ambassadors from old Europe to America. They couldn't get the achievements of the great 19th- and early-20th-century Europeans out of their minds. Their desire for that greatness and their doubts over whether they would achieve it did not, taken together, make them any friendlier as individuals. In a way, Barrett is a man of his time. He himself is more like the picture of the black-souled Rahv he has drawn than he knows. *The Truants* leaves a very bleak, dead message; it says that most of the achievements of the men Barrett came up with proved futile or delusory. The difference between him and his subjects is that, while he has a strong feeling for futility and impermanence, he is a comfortable man. He doesn't feel himself to be a stranger in the world, or, if he does, he doesn't write from such a view. Not feeling that estrangement has kept him a stranger to his own generation. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Allan C. Ornstein

# Decline of the Frostbelt

Over the last 30 years there has been a massive shift of people, jobs, and wealth from the Frostbelt of the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt cities of the South and the West. An arch of economic decay now encompasses the 21 states of the Frostbelt, comprising a total population of 108 million, and extending from New England and the mid-Atlantic to the Great Lakes and the Plains.

While the older cities of the Frostbelt are confronted with the problems of aging plants, job and population losses, eroding tax bases, cuts in public services, and municipal overburden, the Sunbelt cities are moving into the postindustrial world of computers, lasers, and robots, experiencing moderate economic growth, energy surpluses, and expanding middle-class populations. Half of the country is becoming poor, half of it rich. And the welfare state, as we know it, is at great risk.

## Federalism: Dollars and Disparities

IN LESS THAN 25 YEARS, federal grants have expanded from funding 50 programs costing some $4 billion annually to 600 programs costing $95 billion. Although the interregional flow of federal funds is not part of any grand design, the Frostbelt region has suffered a low level of federal funding. Funding formulas have favored states and regions with increasing populations and low personal income levels. (Frostbelt income is more evenly distributed than Sunbelt income.) Strong lobbies and congressional seniority (or clout) have prevailed too. Other factors in the Northeast's and Midwest's deficit are a shortfall of defense, aerospace, and shipyard spending within these areas.

The magnitude of this redistribution, measured as the difference between taxes paid and monies received, can be appreciated by noting that from the early 1950s through 1980 approximately $450 billion (in 1979 dollars) has been shifted from the 21 industrial states of the Northeast and Midwest to the 29 states of the South and West. In total, the South and West received over a half-trillion dollars more through federal programs than these regions paid in taxes. Over a six-year period, between fiscal 1975 and 1980, the cumulative deficit in the Frostbelt regions' balance of payments was $201 billion, while the Sunbelt states enjoyed a $134 billion surplus in their fiscal relationship with the federal government.

While a substantial portion of these federal funds was redistributed from taxes paid by Frostbelt residents, the majority was "created" by deficit spending, which has increased nearly 100 percent since the mid–1970s. These deficits require a growing share of tax revenue for interest payments—and Northeast and Midwest residents pay $250 more per person than the rest of the country. In 12 states, all but one in the South and the West, federal monies received in fiscal 1979 and fiscal 1980 amounted to over 30 percent of the residents' personal income each year, compared to about half of this percentage in the Midwest.

For every dollar sent to the federal government in fiscal 1979, the southern states received $1.10 (Southwest) to $1.15 (Southeast), and western states received $1.00 (Far West) to $1.20 (Rockies), while northeastern states received $0.88 (Mideast) to $0.94 (New England), and midwestern states received $0.71 (Great Lakes) to $1.01 (Plains). In earlier years, the discrepancies were even worse. Between 1952 and 1978, 40 percent of all Sunbelt states had ratios of $1.25 or higher, and more than 60 percent of the Frostbelt states had ratios below $0.90. The greatest discrepancies exist among some of the individual states. For example, in fiscal 1980, Michigan was at the bottom of the list, receiving only 66¢ in federal funding for every dollar paid in federal taxes. Close to this ratio were: Indiana (70¢), New Jersey (71¢), Ohio (71¢), Illinois (73¢), and Wisconsin (74¢). At the other end, there were New Mexico ($1.91), Mississippi ($1.58), Alaska ($1.44), and Virginia ($1.41).

Had every state received a per capita share of federal expenditures, the total disparity among the states would be reduced, with the Great Lakes states enjoying the sharpest increase from $0.71 to $0.95, or 34 percent. Greater equalization of expenditures in relation to tax payments among the old industrial Frostbelt states would require either



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a major decrease of federal military and aerospace spending or an increase in programs dealing with unemployment and urban decay.

Perhaps the best way to reduce the imbalances between federal expenditures and taxes (or of federal spending ratios) would be to eliminate the most widely used formula of tax capacity—that is, per capita income. This measure is not an adequate yardstick of state or local fiscal capacity, and surely there is the need for a broader measure of fiscal capacity, taking into account other revenue sources that are available to a state.

• *The Pentagon Budget* Pentagon spending is a major item in the federal budget. It creates a drastic imbalance in the tax burden imposed on the Frostbelt states. The federal government syphons tax money from 302 of the 435 congressional districts and 29 of the 50 states into those that have large military bases and big military contracts.

For fiscal 1980, for instance, the Pentagon tax burden borne by each state and the amount of money retained through military contracts and salaries varied dramatically, providing net gains for some, severe net losses for others. That fiscal year, the Midwest was the hardest hit with a loss of $19.8 billion in 1980; the five Great Lakes states (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin) lost $17.8 billion. The Northeast also was hit hard, with a net loss of $8.3 billion; the three mid-Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) lost $10.9 billion.

Of the 11 states that suffered a net Pentagon tax loss of $1 billion or more for fiscal 1980, seven were located in the Midwest and three in the Northeast. Moreover, all of these trends have become more pronounced as Pentagon spending has increased some 30 percent from fiscal 1980 to fiscal 1982, indicating that the depletion of the U.S. economic base through military spending is spreading. For example, fiscal 1982 registered, approximately, a $23.5 billion loss for the five Great Lakes states and a $14.5 billion loss for the three mid-Atlantic states.

The principal gainers were concentrated in the southern and western states. For 1980, the South had a net gain of $5.3 billion and the West of $7.1 billion. Of the 18 states with a net Pentagon tax gain of $1 billion or more in 1980, 14 were located in the South and the West.

In terms of tax dollars, then, the Pentagon draws from many and gives to a few. It shows up as a major source of inequity and imbalance in the federal budget and the tax burden, and it contributes heftily to the economic decay of the Midwest and the Northeast. About 70 percent of all Americans suffer net drains on their community, which in turn leads to unemployment. This capital drain consumes the capital base of the nation—the foundation upon which ultimately rest both our taxes and our real income.

## The New Federalism

IN A MOVE that involves a $47-billion swap, the Reagan administration has introduced a package of block grants, or a handful of few-strings programs, in place of dozens of highly regulated ones. Sometime in 1983 or '84, the federal government is expected to take over state expenses for the rapidly rising Medicaid program, which, the Administration estimates, will cost $19.1 billion in 1983. In return, the states will pay for the $16.5 billion Food Stamp and welfare programs. This part of the deal is mandatory, and the particulars are being worked out in Congress. In general, this new federal policy favors the Sunbelt states, to which the aging population is migrating, and it is relieving these states of future increasing costs in health care. In turn, this policy discriminates against the Frostbelt, where the welfare costs are projected to increase.

The other half of the proposition is voluntary through fiscal year 1987. In that time span the states might take responsibility for any or all of some 40 federal programs that fund public (state and local) services and social programs. The Administration estimates that those programs will save the government about $30 billion per year.

According to the Administration's plan, the federal government is to continue to operate those programs the states don't take on until 1987, when a phase-out period would begin that is to end in 1991. The states could use the money for similar programs—or simply eliminate them and use the funds for other purposes, including state tax reduction. By 1991, the federal government would cease dispensing federal programs; federal aid to state and local governments then would be almost as low a proportion of the state government's budgets as it was in 1933.

The cities' biggest worry is that the states will not pick up the programs of the federal government. They believe the federal government started providing services in the first place because states did not accept those responsibilities. Furthermore, state governments as a group are now laboring under severe budget restraints—because of economic constriction, increased costs caused by unemployment ($20 billion in 1982 compared to $9 billion in 1979), the legacy of tax reductions enacted over recent years, voter-imposed tax limita-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions, and federal aid reductions. Thus 19 out of 21 Frostbelt states now have budget problems with deficits or balances of less than 1.5 percent, and so do about half the Sunbelt states. (A 5 percent balance is the accepted norm for efficient fiscal management.) The states under fiscal pressure have not fully replaced federal funds for fiscal 1982 and 1983—even those with historically high commitments to social spending. Only eight states have replaced some of the lost funds; even worse, most states have reduced public spending (programs and personnel) in fiscal 1982 and '83.

These state reductions (accompanied by federal reductions) reverse a 12-year trend in education, whereby states helped provide greater equity and school finance reform—and a 15-year trend of strong social spending. The burden of funding education and public spending in general will fall on local sources in the remaining 1980s—thus increasing disparities between poor and wealthy school districts and local governments. Frostbelt states and especially cities will be hurt most, since their tax bases are quickly eroding.

At a time when federal and state governments are determined to slash urban aid, the cities' dependence on such aid happens to be at an all-time high. Over the past ten years, federal and state grants-in-aid have taken the place of property and sales taxes as the cities' main revenue sources. This is especially true in declining Frostbelt cities, as well as in a few high-need cities in the Sunbelt, such as Miami, Atlanta, or Oakland, where federal aid has increased by 400 percent or more. These cities have experienced declining middle-class populations and industry, and thus lower per capita property values and shrinking sales volume—resulting in more unemployment and higher taxes for remaining residents.

In Chicago, for example, property taxes provided 31 percent of the city's revenues in 1970; they represented 16 percent in 1980. By comparison, state and federal revenues, which accounted for 19 percent of the city's revenues in 1970, provided 37 percent in 1980 (25 percent from federal contributions). Federal aid amounted to a 441 percent increase for the city. Ironically, Chicago is one of the fiscally healthier cities within the Frostbelt; most other Frostbelt cities are far more dependent on federal monies.

In short, the dramatic shift in revenue sources reflects economic decline and high need in those cities, as well as increasing dependence on the federal and state government. The gush of federal money that hid the effects of this decline is now being shut off. By 1990, Frostbelt cities will be spending approximately $1.50 to $2.00 for every $1.00 they collect in taxes and outside aid, unless cuts in spending or new revenue sources are found. The few cities that claim balanced budgets have either stripped their services (for instance, New York City) or have questionable accounting procedures—such as not considering inflation, using capital-expenditure money or pension money for annual operating costs, or deferring payment obligations to the next fiscal year.

Local governments made it through the 1970s, despite declining tax bases, with the help of federal and state transfer aid—supplemented by some increases in local taxes and user charges that made cuts largely unnecessary. Now the cuts are coming. For example, federal aid to education dropped 4 percent in 1981—in sharp contrast to the average annual growth of 10.2 percent in the six years prior to 1981. Between 1982 and '85, federal aid to education is expected to drop another $34.2 billion, or 29.6 percent of the 1980 budget (when federal aid to education reached an all-time high). Adjusted for inflation (at whatever the rate), the real dollar loss will clearly be greater. Although schools are only marginally dependent on federal spending, which now accounts for about 8 percent of expenditures in education, Frostbelt school districts will feel the loss because state revenues cannot easily offset such losses. Moreover, urban Frostbelt schools will suffer the most, since the Administration expects to distribute funds to local schools on a per-child basis rather than on need.

## Infrastructure: Delays and Decay

THE UNITED STATES' physical plant is literally coming apart at the seams: our highways, railroads, bridges, ports, water and sewage systems, and municipal buildings are deteriorating faster than we are repairing or replacing them. Badly needed construction has been delayed for the past 20 years at all levels of government. The federal government has pushed pet projects of influential congressmen and lobby groups, mostly from Sunbelt states, at the expense of desperately needed public works. State and local governments have been reluctant to take remedial measures, even when they had the resources, because pressure from municipal workers (including teachers) for higher salaries and from social pressure groups (welfare recipients, senior citizens, the handicapped, and so on) for more services tipped governmental priorities toward winning votes and meeting social demands. Now many states and cities are hard-pressed to



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

find money for sorely needed maintenance or new construction. Here are some of the problems.

• *Interstate Highways* The nation's 42,000-mile interstate system, just nearing completion, is wearing out at the rate of 2,000 miles a year, and there is another 25 percent or 10,000 miles that is worn out and needs resurfacing. Costs for repairing or rebuilding this system have been estimated to run between $43 billion and $60 billion (using 1982 data), yet less than 5 percent of these costs have been allocated by the federal government.

• *State and City Streets* These roads are in worse condition and in greater need of repair than the interstate system, especially in the cities, because they are older and take a greater pounding by trucks and traffic congestion. State and local standards for repair vary, thus estimates for repair and rebuilding in this decade also vary—from $200 billion to $700 billion. But no more than 25 percent or, at most, 33 percent of the needed money is now available or being set aside. Meanwhile, the cost of rebuilding a road was 166 percent higher in 1980 than it had been in 1970.

• *Bridges* Of the nation's 557,500 bridges, more than 20 percent are so dangerously deficient that they are either restricted or closed. Another 45 percent of the highway bridge approaches are deficient or obsolete. New York City alone has about 775 bridges, about 25 percent of them in need of repair, and many are large and old (75 years and older). Cleveland is "lucky"; it needs to repair only about 10 percent of its 490 bridges—at a cost of $124 million. Boston is "unlucky"; 75 percent of its bridges are in need of major rehabilitation or complete replacement. Nationwide costs for the maintenance of bridges are estimated to be $48 billion.

The federal government's new 5¢ tax on gasoline is expected to raise about $5.5 billion per year over the next five years, money to be used to rebuild highways, roads, and bridges. Not only is this an obvious shortfall in needed revenues, it also makes the federal government responsible for repairs that now are handled by states and localities.

• *Railroads and Ports* Spending for train, track, and equipment maintenance has steadily increased each year—from $4.1 billion in 1971 to $12.3 billion in 1981. Although our once deplorably dilapidated railroads are improving, there were still 6,468 trains derailed in 1980. In many parts of the Midwest and Northeast, freight cars creep along at 10 m.p.h. Despite the fact that 27 million new crossties and 881,000 tons of new rail were installed in the years 1976–80, about 30 percent of the total U.S. tracks and railbeds still need repair or replacement. The cost for this work is difficult to estimate, but a good guess is that the railroads will need to set aside $100–250 billion to meet deferred and ongoing maintenance for the remaining 1980s.

The ports are in worse condition. Sometimes hundreds of ships are anchored offshore along the East Coast; terminals are so inadequate or badly in need of maintenance that the colliers and oil tankers must wait in line 30 to 60 days to pick up or discharge cargoes. Private companies would like to build new terminals or assist cities in developing their ports, but there are no eastern, Great Lakes, or Gulf Coast harbors deep enough to accommodate new giant vessels.

• *Mass Transit* While the Sunbelt and western states have a minimal mass-transit system, partly because of the influence of big oil, the older cities of the Frostbelt need millions of dollars merely for maintenance, not to speak of improvement. In Philadelphia, the Broadstreet transit system alone needs $110 million to repair and replace its 1920 car motors and trains. In San Francisco, the 120-year-old cable-car system was shut down in 1982 for two years to facilitate an overhaul, at costs supposedly limited to $60 million. In New York City, the transit-system renovation program will cost about $5.8 billion over the next five years, and passengers are expected to pay one-third of it in projected fare increases of 100–200 percent. Worse: by 1985, about 25 percent of the nation's 300 mass-transit systems may have to cease operations (for instance, San Francisco), owing to hazardous conditions.

• *Water Systems* Cracked pipes and water mains are common in our major cities—causing millions of gallons of tap water to disappear daily. Almost every old city loses 10–25 percent of its water through leaks, with New York City being in a class by itself—losing 100 million gallons of water per day! Some pipes and valves in the old cities of the Northeast and Midwest are 100 years old or older; rotted, they are kept together with plugs and straps.

Over the next 20 years it is estimated that the nation's major urban areas will have to spend $75–100 billion just to maintain their water systems and meet pollution standards. These projected costs do not take into account needed capital markets for new industry or population growth, which is another problem among growing Sunbelt states. Of the 5,622 communities surveyed in 1978, the Commerce Department found 1,844 operating at the point of capacity, and new population loads would entail new construction.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• *Public Buildings* About 30–33 percent of our nation's public buildings are at least 50 years old and suffer rotted windows, outdated electric and plumbing systems, inefficient heating and cooling plants, and some kind of roofing, masonry, or structural problems. In short, they are obsolete—or in need of very expensive reconstruction. We are talking about the nation's schools, libraries, prisons, hospitals, fire and police departments, and numerous other village, city, county, state, regional, and federal buildings. The total bill could run from $250 billion to $750 billion.

Consider the condition of the schools. For example, 294 out of 614 Chicago school buildings are more than 50 years old; as many as 85 were built before 1900 and the cost for deferred maintenance is estimated to run about $175–200 million. Of the 200 schools in Washington, D.C., approximately 30 percent are at least 50 years old, and deferred maintenance costs approach $50–75 million. In Cleveland, 50 percent of the 150 schools are at least 50 years old, and cost for deferred maintenance is estimated at more than $50 million. Schools in San Diego, California, on the other hand—as in many other parts of the Sunbelt—are relatively new; only 2 percent are 50 years old or older, and costs for deferred maintenance run only $18 million.

## Frostbelt-City Problems

THE OLDEST CITIES in the country, those in the Frostbelt, suffer the greatest infrastructural problems caused by decay—decay not merely brought on by age but also by weather conditions, congestion, pollution, and other causes.

In the Northeast and Midwest, the annual weather range has a spread of 100–120 Fahrenheit degrees, causing considerable constriction and expansion of surfaces and structures, such as roads, sidewalks, bridges, tunnels, and buildings. The intense cold makes the water and sewer systems vulnerable to freezing, producing cracks and leaks; it also requires special construction materials (resulting in additional costs) unnecessary in the Sunbelt. The frequent use of salt to combat ice and sleet underfoot causes major erosion of structural surfaces and transit systems, and the acid rain, produced by the concentrated pollution of heavy industry and automobile fumes, causes deterioration of the environment and of all stationary and moving systems.

The population in these old urban regions is the country's most dense, resulting in concentrated use and greater demand on public facilities and public works. Compounding these problems of concentrated decay s the fact that population and industry are fleeing these cities, which not only reduces the financial base but also shifts attention and capital investment to new facilities in growth areas. Thinned-out central cities tend to be ignored, yet their facilities must be maintained as though they were still used at capacity.

The old Frostbelt cities also have a reputation for dispensing public-works money for purposes of politics rather than need. Although there is tremendous waste and mismanagement of tax money throughout the country, the old cities, particularly, have long experience with criminal abuse and fraudulent use of public funds. These old cities have been financially strapped since the 1970s and have literally stopped much preventive maintenance and reduced repair crews. Today repair money for public works tends to come from capital originally budgeted for new construction. Thus, in some Frostbelt cities, up to 50 percent of the funds meant to provide for the future are being spent to pay for present expenses.

All this means that the old cities have the most urgent needs. New York City needs $40 billion to care for its streets, bridges, sewers, parks, hospitals, schools, libraries, fire and police stations. Because of its fiscal condition, it will invest $1.4 billion per year for these facilities. Chicago needs $5–8 billion for its infrastructure needs. Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Louis each need $2–5 billion. As to the whole national need, estimates, so far, are merely guesses, one (made in 198' by Pat Choate and Susan Walter in *America in Ruins*) reaching an astronomical $3 trillion.

• *Delays Cost More Than Repairs* The effect of ignoring our inadequate public facilities has enormous implications in dysfunctional costs and economic decline. For example, train delays cost up to $1 billion a year in lost revenues, and in 1981 alone, railroad accidents cost $922 million in loss, damage, and injuries. The fact that hundreds of ships at times are simultaneously anchored offshore causes cargo spoilage and extra labor costs of $1–5 billion per year. Companies in Manhattan lose $166 million a year for each five-minute delay on subways and buses, and its numerous potholes cost the city $20.9 million in 1981 in property damage claims. U.S. Steel estimates it is losing $1.2 million per year in employee time and wasted fuel for rerouting trucks around one bridge in Pittsburgh. One highway industrial group estimates that the aggregate cost to the private sector for bad roads and bridges is $30 billion a year—for everything from



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broken axles to lost business. A recent federal highway study found that spending an extra $4.2 billion to fix dilapidated bridges and roads could prevent 480,000 injuries and save 17,200 lives over the next 15 years. The longer we wait to renew our public works, the greater the cost in future repairs and the more difficult it will be to sustain long-term economic growth.

• *Population Shifts* In the 1970s—after two decades of watching helplessly while their middle-class citizens pulled up stakes and headed for the suburbs—mayors and social scientists took heart over a projected "return to the cities."

It didn't happen. Though the rate of white flight slowed in the 1970s, the percentage of middle-class residents in cities, especially in the Frostbelt, continued to decline in comparison with that of minority and low-income populations. The much-heralded "return" proved to be a short-lived real-estate boom, triggered by a small percentage of young couples and singles, and was confined to selected areas along the lakes, parks, and downtown university areas of Frostbelt cities. The puffed-up real-estate market—followed by a fixation for investment of big money into downtown areas at the expense of other neighborhoods—created a false impression of revitalization.

Urban flight in the Frostbelt slowed, not because the cities have begun retaining or attracting financially stable families, but because most of those who were likely to leave had already gone—or were settling elsewhere to begin with.

In order to appreciate the implications of these population shifts for the city schools, we must realize that those who left the cities were the white middle class with children. Thus the people who were to help bear the burden of school support have written off the cities' public schools, unwilling to maintain and participate in a system that, mostly, benefits others.

In 1950 all but one of the nation's 25 largest city public-school systems (Washington, D.C.) had a white majority. By 1980, all but two (Columbus, Ohio, and San Diego, California) had mostly minority students—blacks, Hispanics, or Asian immigrants. In 1950, only one of every ten students was classified as a minority member in these 25 city school systems. In 1960, the number was one of three; in 1970, it was one of two. By 1980, it was seven out of ten, and by 1990—unless these cities are integrated with their adjacent suburbs—the proportion of minority students will soar to nine out of 10.

Of the 22 largest U.S. cities—with 500,000 or more inhabitants in 1980—11 were located in the Frostbelt and 11 in the Sunbelt. In the last 30 years, there have been dramatic increases of blacks in the Frostbelt cities and minimal increases of blacks in Sunbelt cities. For the 11 Frostbelt cities, the median black population was 38.9 percent in 1980 compared to 15 percent in 1950. Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., have experienced more than 100 percent increases in black population during this 30-year period—Boston, Detroit, and Milwaukee saw increases of over 250 percent. For the 11 Sunbelt cities, the median black population was 17 percent in 1980, compared to 10.7 percent in 1950. Only two of these cities—Memphis and New Orleans—had substantial black populations linked to traditional and not to changing population patterns.

The continuous exodus of much of the white population from the major cities of the Frostbelt, accompanied by restrictive policies against blacks in the adjacent suburbs, has led to a decline in the tax base and has stimulated business flight, and job flight, from the cities to the suburbs and the Sunbelt. This trend has resulted in further erosion of the financial base of the Frostbelt cities. Most important, the percentage increase in the central cities' black and other minority population has resulted in municipal overburden—since a large number of them are poor, undereducated, and unskilled, requiring many special services. The few Sunbelt cities with financial problems and municipal overburden all have large minority populations.

## Energy: Policies and Prospects

BETWEEN 1960 AND 1980, the nation increased its energy consumption by 60 percent or about 2.5 percent a year on the average. When energy was cheap, this growth rate was affordable; in the next 20 years, however, it will probably be halved, because consumers will opt for increased energy efficiency and reduced consumption.

While the older and colder industrial states of the Frostbelt have had to absorb the higher cost of energy needs—having to import 75 percent either from other states or abroad—states with abundant energy supply (almost all in the Sunbelt) have benefited economically, receiving higher prices and revenues for their resources.

• *Severance Taxes* Despite recent events, OPEC monopoly pricing and domestic decontrol combine to provide windfall revenues to all parties engaged in energy production. Usually, OPEC controls enough incremental oil-supply capacity to enforce its price decisions (barring overproduction) on the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entire world—to the extent that only limited supply-demand mechanisms operate in the marketplace.

Under decontrol, these inflated prices provide monopoly-revenue returns for private industry and the opportunity for energy-rich states to impose severance taxes (on depleting resources) and obtain other revenues (such as payroll taxes, royalties, and return to their local stockholders). With rising prices for energy, these taxes and other revenues generate massive shifts of wealth to energy-producing states, profits to their local energy-related businesses, more jobs, and greater tax bases—in turn reducing local and state tax burdens for their residents.

At present, nine southern and western states collect 90 percent of all severance-tax revenues and receive the greatest benefits from the nation's energy resources. In 1972, these nine states collected $710 million in severance taxes. By 1978, it was $2 billion or about a 40 percent increase per year. In 1981, it was $5 billion or about an 80 percent increase per year. In 1982, it was $10 billion—a 100 percent increase for one year! The increases expected for the rest of the 1980s—the era that is to see domestic decontrol—should dwarf anything we have seen so far. Severance and royalty revenues for these energy-rich states are estimated to run $120–220 billion in the years 1981–90.

Alaska (considered part of the Far West) is the only state with rigorous projections on oil and gas severance tax and royalty revenues reaching into the future. The Alaskans' estimates approach $200 billion in revenues over the 1981–2000 period, that is, $10 billion per year. These estimates are based only on the known reserves at Prudhoe Bay and don't include untapped Alaskan reservoirs estimated to be worth $1.3 trillion for oil and $720 billion for natural gas (based on year-end 1981 prices). This state, with 402,000 residents (about the population of Pittsburgh), has trouble spending its money. It has abolished its income tax, slashed property taxes, granted subsidized business loans, repaired most of its immediate infrastructure, and, in 1982, presented $1,000 to each of its residents.

Wyoming now levies a 17.5 percent and Montana a 30.5 percent severance tax on coal. The electric companies of the Midwest need the coal for electric power. Consequently, in 1980, each Illinoisian paid a $3.18 tax on coal to the Wyoming and Montana treasuries. That year each Wisconsin resident paid a coal tax of $3.60 and each resident of Minnesota paid $5.40 to Montana.

The benefits for Wyoming and Montana, each with fewer than 500,000 residents, are worth noting: no state income tax, no corporate income tax, a sales tax of 3 percent, property taxes at 3.5 percent of market value (that is, $350 for a home worth $100,000). Both state treasuries had billion-dollar surpluses in fiscal 1981 and 1982—a year when 30 states had to cut programs to keep from going into deficit!

The point is, energy-related fees and severance-tax revenues help produce higher consumer costs and taxes in energy-poor states and enable energy-rich states to reduce, or even eliminate, other taxes. Compound the different tax rates with the fact that the Frostbelt's colder climates require more costly plant construction and higher operating costs (especially for energy) than the warmer climates of the Sunbelt. In 1978, for example, capital plant construction was calculated to be 38 percent and energy cost 11.5 percent higher in Minnesota than in Louisiana. As prices for materials and energy have increased dramatically, the gap between these two states' construction and operating costs has widened considerably. The difference in taxes as well as in construction and operating costs cannot be ignored by companies or people seeking to invest money, to expand, or to relocate in a particular state or region.

Despite a short-term glut of energy and a reduction in the producers' price of some energy sources (such as oil and gas), prices to the consumer will continue to increase (to the level permitted by law) because of monopolistic arrangements among wholesalers and distributors, and pipeline and utility companies; certain contract provisions entered into in the past (under different market conditions); and lack of current alternative energy sources.

Three major, related problems, among others, have resulted from rising energy prices, and severance-tax and royalty revenues. First, these revenues serve as powerful incentives for people and businesses to move from burdened regions—accelerating massive shifts of middle-class populations and jobs, away from the Frostbelt, to energy-rich Sunbelt states. As more of these states might lower or eliminate traditional taxes, they become even more attractive places for relocation. Second, these energy revenues will distort and outdate current federal funding formulas. Unless these formulas are changed, energy-rich states will receive inequitably large shares, disproportionate to their newfound wealth. Third, there is the danger of retaliatory policies and divisive tax warfare, with each state taxing its exports or commodities just to preserve its economy.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• *Energy and the Economy* The energy bills Frostbelt residents and businesses have to pay are expected to remain a growing portion of their living and operating costs. For example, average Frostbelt-state residents spent about 6–7.5 percent of their personal income on energy in 1980 and will pay about 9–15 percent by 1990. This assumes a 10–12 percent yearly increase in energy prices and a 6–7 percent yearly growth rate in personal income.

Starting in 1973, energy price increases began to shock the nation's economy, paving the way for a decade of combined inflation and sluggish economic growth in the Frostbelt. For example, between 1972 and 1979 the price of foreign crude oil increased by 470 percent and that of natural gas by more than 250 percent. After 1979, concurrent with the growing recession, energy prices increased at a slower rate. Nevertheless, in 1979 energy bills jumped 37 percent, 18 percent in 1980, 12 percent in 1981, and 19 percent in 1982—compared with an average increase of 8.5 percent in consumer costs for those years. Using 1980 as a base year, energy costs are expected to increase 50–75 percent by 1985 and 100–150 percent by 1990. Needless to say, these costs have jumped most dramatically in the Frostbelt, and will continue to do so because of shipping, pipeline, and infrastructure costs, as well as the colder climate.

Rising energy costs have exacerbated the flow of dollars out of the Frostbelt economy. Under present economic conditions, the Northeast and the Midwest cannot recapture these dollars through an increase of their own exports. Instead, this dollar drain is causing a drop in economic activity among Frostbelt states—accelerating the loss of jobs and people, resulting in further decline of income for the businesses and residents who remain, and in lower tax revenues for the Frostbelt states. Worse, this regional transfer of capital, plant, and work force has a "multiplier" effect—draining the Frostbelt economy of future wealth and jobs in greater proportion (4:1 to 5:1) to the current outflow of dollars. This prediction is based on the notion of investment leverage and the fact that almost every job produces additional jobs. In reverse, when the producers' price of energy is reduced, as it is in 1983, the energy-rich states and related industries in the Sunbelt also suffer—and there is a multiplier effect.

When energy payments increase faster than personal income, four problems arise. (1) There is less money available to buy goods and services. (2) Lower demand for local goods and services reduces gross state product and increases job loss. (3) The pool of available investment funds is shrinking because only part of the energy payments are "neutral" or will benefit the home state in the Frostbelt. (4) The lack of new investment funds slows economic growth still further; unless the flow of dollars is modified, the Frostbelt region will continue to experience loss of income and jobs.

The schools too are affected by rising energy costs in this "no-win" proposition. Energy costs have far outstripped the overall school budget increases allowed by the voters and have forced school administrators to divert funds from instructional programs and maintenance budgets. For example, between the school years 1972–73 and 1978–79, the public schools in New York State reduced their energy consumption by 16.2 percent. Nevertheless, energy costs escalated by 141 percent—from $95 million to $229 million. Most important, the proportion of operations and maintenance budgets spent on energy increased by 51 percent. By 1985, energy costs for New York schools, and schools in other Frostbelt states, should be 75–100 percent higher than they were in the 1978–79 school year. In short, energy costs threaten to disrupt the instructional program and quality of schools in the Frostbelt regions.

## Conclusion

FOR THE LAST 80 YEARS, the Frostbelt has been the center of U.S. industrial might. Today it has become "aged America," plagued by disparities in federal funding and declining tax bases, worn out infrastructures, middle-class and white flight, high costs for energy, and massive shifts of industries and wealth to Sunbelt and energy-rich states.

There are no reliable roadmaps to recovery for the Frostbelt cities and states to follow. To be sure, we can expect little help from the present Administration, since the Sunbelt controls the electoral vote (the last four elected presidents came from the Sunbelt) and the core of Reagan's constituency comes from this region. Collective action must be taken by the Frostbelt population to reverse this seemingly endless slide and decay.

### To Our Contributors

- When sending manuscripts, please make sure that you do not send your only copy.
- And please also be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## Reference Notes


*Annual Report to Congress, 1981*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Energy, July, 1982).

*Bankrupting America: The Tax Burden and Expenditures of the Pentagon by Congressional Districts* (Lansing: Employment Research Associates, 1982).

*A Changing Federalism: The Condition of the States* (Washington, D.C.: Education Commission of the States, April 1982).

Pat Choate and Susan Walter, *America in Ruins* (Washington, D.C.: Council of State Planning Agencies, 1981).

*Chicago: Neighborhood Needs Strategy Analysis* (Chicago: Melanipy & Associates, 1981).

Richard Corrigan and Rochelle L. Stanfield, "Rising Energy Prices: What's Good for Some States Is Bad for Others," *National Journal*, March 22, 1980, pp. 468–70.

*Energy Efficiency in the Illinois Economy: 1980–2000*, Vol. 6 (Chicago: Illinois Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources, Unpublished Draft, 1983).

David A. Grossman, *The Future of New York City's Capital Plant* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1979).

Joel Havemann and Rochelle L. Stanfield, "'Neutral' Federal Policies Are Reducing Frostbelt-Sunbelt Spending Imbalances," *National Journal*, February 2, 1981, pp. 233–36.

*The New Federalism—Present and Future* (Chicago: Illinois State Chamber of Commerce, June 1982).

Allan C. Ornstein, "The Urban Setting: Frostbelt/Sunbelt Differences," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1982.

John L. Palmer and Isabel V. Sawhill, "Perspectives on the Reagan Experiment," *Urban Institute Policy and Research Report*, Fall 1982, pp. 1–17.

George Peterson, *Fiscal Changes for the Next Decade* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1982).

*The President's National Urban Policy Report, 1980* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, December 1980).

*Regional Impact of Rising Energy Prices* (Minneapolis: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, June 1981).

"State and Local Government in Trouble," *Business Week*, October 26, 1981, pp. 135–81.

*State Revenues from Non-Renewable Energy Resources* (Washington, D.C.: Northeast-Midwest Institute, June 1982).

U.S. Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Standard Consolidated Areas*, No. PC-80-S1-5 (October 1981).

*U.S. Population: Where We Are; Where We're Going* (Washington, D.C.: Reference Bureau, June 1982). □



# PRAXIS
## INTERNATIONAL

Editors: Richard J. Bernstein and Mihailo Marković

Volume 3 no. 1 — April 1983

**The Peace Movement and Disarmament**
The "Normalisation" of Europe — E.P. THOMPSON
The Peace Movement in Eastern Europe — FERENC KÖSZEGI and ISTVAN SZENT-IVANYI

No First Use of Nuclear Weapons — ROBERT C. TUCKER

**Articles**
The Problem of Democracy in Mass Society — UMBERTO CERRONI
The Uses of Freedom and the Human Condition — JASMINKA UDOVICKI
The Outlook for Reform in Eastern Europe — JÁNOS BAK and LYMAN H. LEGTERS

Psychic Alienation in Marx — W. PETER ARCHIBALD

Published quarterly: April, July, October and January
Subscriptions to Volume 3 (1983)
Individuals: £13.95 (UK); £16.75 (Overseas); $33.50 (US); $40.50 (Canada)
Institutions: £32.00 (UK); £39.40 (Overseas); $75.00 (US); $92.50 (Canada)

Please send orders, with payment, to: Sue Dommett, Journals Department, Basil Blackwell Publisher, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JF, England.

**Basil Blackwell · Oxford · England**



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bogdan Denitch

# Stability & Change in Eastern Europe

The longevity of the East European Communist systems—they have lasted over 35 years—poses a serious question: what are the sources of social stability and legitimacy in these societies? In the late '40s and early '50s most specialists assumed that, except for Yugoslavia and perhaps Albania, these systems were inherently unstable and indeed illegitimate. We further postulated (omitting conscious and unconscious apologists for a "socialism without a human face") that what ultimately kept these systems in power was the sheer degree of repression available to the local elites, reinforced by the Soviet Union's willingness to intervene massively to preserve the existing order in its bailiwick.

By the '60s, however, a new generation of social and political scientists began to turn its attention to a systematic study of East European states and societies. The paradigms used by the new students of East European societies tend to stress modernization and urbanization. Walter Connor's excellent study, *Socialism, Politics and Equality* (Columbia University Press, 1979), makes the additional point that the actual rate of social mobility and growth of the East European states has to be taken in its specific local context—that is, the context of stagnant, basically agricultural societies characterized by a low rate of social mobility compared to the rest of Europe. These were societies peripheral to the major European developments.

One unifying factor for the East European states that had no large Communist parties—all but Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia at the time of the Communist takeover—was the very rapid increase of social mobility through the party into the freshly vacated slots previously occupied by traditional power-holders. An extensive bureaucratic apparatus had to be constructed and a very substantial section of the professional middle classes to be replaced. Added to these two factors was the population's rapid move from the countryside into the cities and an unprecedented expansion of state power. This meant that for the large section of the population that was basically apolitical or at least willing to forgo political engagement, these regimes represented an unparalleled opportunity for the bright, the ambitious, and the careerists. Several results followed. First, a whole new "class" was created that owed its advancement to the new regime. Second, the party became the center of notables and the avenue of mobility, and, increasingly over the years, membership in the party had little to do with actual political belief. Finally, these rapid rates of mobility created a generational cleavage as new contenders came on the social scene.

Immediately following the rapid promotion of the first appointees to new positions of importance was a period of routinized advancement, involving professional and academic training, through the universities and bureaucratic services. This second stage in turn has been followed by a current near-crisis: the overproduction of would-be occupants of nonmanual occupations. Thus today's young generation is facing not only stagnant economic conditions with real drops in living standards but a socioeconomic hierarchy made up of relatively well-trained and young officials. In any case, one of the major pillars of regime stability has been the fact that careers were open to the talented. This pattern affected all but a very few choice positions reserved by the *nomenclatura*.

If mobility into elite and professional position was the usual reward for the talented and ambitious able to work out a modus vivendi with the regime, a far wider range of the population was affected by the twin universals of Eastern Europe. These are *industrialization* with its concomitant urbanization, and *security* with its concomitant of an all but universal, although limited and drab, welfare state. For most of the transplanted rural people, the move from agriculture into industry



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and from village into town represented a vast, although sometimes involuntary social leap. This leap alone signified a major increase in living standards and located most of the population where services were easier to provide. For that first generation, rural nostalgia notwithstanding, the regimes had delivered a better life. This is particularly so because, as we must remember, the takeoff point fell into the period of reconstruction of a war-torn society and economy—that is, it began well below the already low living standards of the intrawar years.

This sort of welfare state may seem limited compared to Western Europe but is an enormous step forward in terms of East European experience. After all, in the first few decades it provided full employment (and it is irrelevant now to cavil and point out that this was inefficient overemployment), near-universal medical services, a vast expansion of educational opportunity, job security, pensions, and an enormous housing program that at least seemed to hold the promise of resolving at some distant point in the future an endless housing crisis. Again, the measuring stick of the prewar years made the performance of these regimes less dismal than West European observers realized.

IN QUESTION HERE is the implicit social contract between the regimes and its working classes over the past three decades. The social contract implied that in exchange for relatively low productivity and industrial peace, the regimes would provide full and secure employment, with a low but continuous increase in living standards.

But now the deal increasingly appears to be off. As regime after regime is forced to try to get productivity increases out of a working class that takes its present status for granted, the social contract seems to be unraveling. That contract was expressed pithily in the old Polish joke: "Our system is based on imagination and pretense; they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work." Unfortunately, when the ruling establishment seeks to change one-half of the arrangement—get increased productivity without substantial increases in living standards—all the traditional defensive instincts of the working class come into play. And in Poland this resulted in the founding of Solidarity.

My prognosis is that the working class will be a source of increasing trouble for East European regimes. The most important reason is the increasing dependence of East European regimes on the world market and on massive infusions of loans and technology from the capitalist West. This fact underlines the system's failure to develop an autarchic East European economic community and the increasing inability and unwillingness of the Soviet Union to continue subsidizing these regimes at previous rates by providing energy and raw materials at prices well below those of the world market. The Soviets need the hard currency themselves and may very well soon need the energy resources too.

This changed relationship to the world market creates enormous pressures on the East European regimes toward greater economic efficiency, both in providing the quality of goods that could be exported and in keeping the costs low enough to make such exports realistic. This in turn means an assault on two bases of internal stability. First, an aggressive attempt to get greater productivity from blue-collar workers is all but inevitable. Second, in order to do that, an assault must be launched on the living standards of the regimes' own elites.

THERE ARE THREE WAYS in which the nonmanual—elite—strata now act as a brake on the system's efficiency:

(1) At the top, of course, there is the sheer organizational inefficiency of the managerial elites and the planning apparatus. It is becoming ever more difficult to expect sacrifices from the workers without giving them at least the feeling that the party will stop protecting the inefficient managers, and that there will be some equality of sacrifice.

(2) A heavy burden is created by the economy's vast overexpansion of white-collar and bureaucratic slots. In order to achieve full employment in a society characterized by free, mass education, there is continual pressure to expand administrative bureaucratic and service jobs in order to at least formally employ the graduates of the vast university and technical-school systems.

(3) *If the productivity of blue-collar workers is low in Eastern Europe, the productivity of white-collar workers and professionals is abysmal.* The fact is that no East European regime has managed to change the traditional prejudice against manual and technical occupations. Thus social mobility is seen as desirable in most of Eastern Europe primarily because it gets people out of manual and industrial jobs.

The enormous nonmanual strata of Eastern Europe are not only a brake on the regimes' attempt to achieve industrial efficiency while avoiding a direct confrontation with the industrial working class, but they are a long-range time bomb in their clearly expressed desire that their children shall certainly not suffer downward mobility and become manual workers. This means that the East



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

European regimes face an exceedingly unattractive dilemma: either reduce the number of white-collar occupations by cutting back on admissions to the universities through the introduction of competitive "objective" examinations favoring the middle and professional strata—or introduce a class-quota system that subjects an ever-increasing proportion of middle-class children to downward social mobility. In either case, the regimes' claim to legitimacy is put into question.

In the first case, the class and status gap between the blue-collar workers and other strata will increase and become near-permanent. The worker-versus-regime relationship will be underlined to a point where it imperils whatever vestiges of "workerist" ideology the regime has used to legitimate its existence. In the second case, a prolonged conflict with the regimes' beneficiaries will occur and will challenge their second claim to legitimacy—that the regimes have provided careers and advancement to all who have talent. The general point is that for the East European Communist regimes, growth, and visible growth at that, appears to have been indispensable as an element in providing first grudging acceptance and then some elements of legitimacy.

There is another reason why the regimes of Eastern Europe might have to face great difficulties in managing industrial unrest sometime in the '80s: the generational shift within the industrial working class itself. The older workers remember not only that they were rewarded by relatively rapid mobility (or at least many who came from the rural areas were)—but also the repressive mailed fist of "high Stalinism," which lasted until 1956.

The newer, younger workers, although growing up in an authoritarian society, have never really experienced mass terror and take whatever gains they get as their right. Thus neither the carrot nor the stick is particularly effective with the second-generation industrial workers. Further, the very social mobility provided through the party has had a fatal or near-fatal effect on its ability to maintain some link with the industrial workers. In the '40s and '50s, a party activist who had been an industrial worker was slated for rapid promotion, which in practice meant rapid promotion *out* of the industrial working class. While this, of course, does not mean that there are no industrial workers who are members of the party today, these workers are certainly not activists and are more likely to represent the pressure of industrial workers within the party than the ear and voice of the party within the plants.

Finally, the workers, as a class, are exceedingly difficult to repress. It is possible to pick out and censure individual charismatic leaders, but the strategic position of the blue-collar workers within the economy and the complex set of ideological claims that give the regimes a pseudo-workerist ideology make it much harder to crack down on workers than on other social strata.

ANOTHER CRUCIAL PROBLEM that the regimes share is a feature of the devolution of totalitarian states into authoritarian ones. Quite simply, the population now is far less isolated in terms of mass communications than it was in the earlier period. Brutality and oppression become thereby more visible, and an ability to compare one's living standard with the rest of the world is more generally available. This, of course, is most pronounced in the case of East Germany, where 87 percent of the population receives West German TV stations, thus making regime censorship all but useless. But an end to isolation is, to one extent or another, a feature of all East European states today. It is hard to enforce effective isolation if you are at the same time trying to build up mass tourism, increase your economic ties with the West, and sell your overpriced TV sets to your own population.

I do not believe that the peasantry, if it can be said to exist at all any more as a significant stratum, is a significant problem for the East European regimes. Most agricultural workers either work on collective farms or are best described as small landholders. With the exception of Bulgaria and to some extent Hungary, the East European regimes have tended to experience crises of agricultural production rather than confrontations with rural dissent. The rural population is simply too fragmented and isolated to successfully threaten repressive Communist regimes.

However, when considering all the challenges that East European regimes face in this decade, one must be careful not to assume that such crises are fatal. After all, prolonged conflict can be handled by a regime that faces no effective domestic challenges to its legitimacy. And surely, in the East European states no organized, legitimate contenders for power—no recognized representatives of the interests of a large constituency—counterpose themselves to the regimes. (Whether this would be so if the latent Soviet presence did not make such challenges suicidal is a different question.) The Church in Poland does have such a potential but refrains from presenting itself as a contender in the political arena. The working class, too, has such a potential. But while making it increasingly difficult for the regimes to govern, it has not yet devel-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oped—except in Poland—organizations and institutions that can represent its interests and are able to muster sufficient clout and alternative, effective authority. And it is still an open question whether under conditions of illegality in authoritarian regimes such authority can develop at all.

I therefore conclude that the East European regimes do not face immediate challenges, but that they also do not have the capacity to work out new social contracts and compromises with an increasingly restive population. Since legitimacy itself, however, is not a clear-cut category but rather a varying continuum, the useful way to view the East European regimes, other than Yugoslavia, is that they will continue to have highly limited legitimacy, and that their ability to rule will continue to depend on the absence of clear, viable alternatives —and ultimately on Soviet power itself. □

Olivier Roy

## The Resistance in Afghanistan

At the start, the uprising of the Afghan population against the Communist regime was a spontaneous movement, centered around the village elders. But very soon and of necessity, the character of the resistance changed: to fight a machine as formidable as the Soviet army, it's not enough to have weapons and fighters. It requires a certain kind of organization, a conception of what guerrilla warfare is about, and a political program that will enlist the help of the civilian population.

In the various areas of Afghanistan, the movement developed in very different ways, depending on geographic conditions, the local ethnic groups, and the various resistance parties. (The differences among the resistance parties are determined largely by ethnic and social diversity but also by the varying, more substantive political attitudes.)

The Afghan resistance now is no longer a peasant revolt but rather a movement guided by political cadres. Its character, however, still varies from one area to another. And we must distinguish between two main areas: the tribal areas, particularly the southeast with its Pushtu population, and the nontribal areas of the north, with their predominantly Tadzhik population.

In the tribal areas (those determined by tribal life and divisions), the resistance remains very traditionalist. The cadres form along tribal lines—Khan and Malek. The mullahs wield much less influence over them than one might assume; although the tribal people are very religious, their political system rests on tribal custom and not on Moslem law. For this reason most of the people in the tribal areas have joined the so-called moderate, that is to say lay and traditionalist, parties. Their concept of warfare remains traditional—mass mobilization, harassment of the enemy on roads and military posts. As there is generally no (overall) political organization outside the tribal structures, this form of resistance doesn't seem to generate much mobility.

Since most Afghan refugees, especially in the camps in Pakistan, are of tribal background and Afghanistan's tribal areas are located along the Pakistani border, most superficial Western observers—not to mention those who merely stay in Pakistan for a short while and then proceed to write about the Afghan resistance—view the tribes as its mainstay.

WHEN ONE PENETRATES DEEPER into the nontribal areas of Afghanistan—the larger part of the country—and travels, as this writer did, north of Kabul (to the Pandzhir valley) or west (to Herat), one sees a very different picture: the emerging new resistance cadres. In these cadres one finds young intellectuals, not in great numbers but now holding the command posts (within the Jamiat-é-Islami party at any rate). They are university educated, many have a scientific background, and their political activism dates back to the days of the old regime. Most of them come out of the provincial petty-bourgeoisie. They became politicized in their student days when they joined the Moslem Youth Organization, strictly a student movement often viewed with distrust by the traditional clergy. The young Islamists opposed the Westernization of the Afghan way of life and the increasingly pro-Soviet drifting of President Daoud's regime, as well as the mullahs' traditionalism. They were recruited in secondary-school and university science departments, whereas the Marxists tended to be liberal-arts students; other Islamists were recruited in the government theological schools, while the nongovernment theological seminaries produced a far more traditional clergy.

These young people, who come out of the mod-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ern lay schools, products of modernism rather than of tradition, are revolutionaries by design. As they do not in any way object to modern technology while opposing its underlying ideologies, they very soon became engaged in political activism against the old regime, which climaxed in the failed Pandzhir insurrection of 1975. Very soon thereafter, in the days of repression, differences arose between the movement's "radicals"—led by the engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—and the "centrists" guided by the very few Ulemas (religious scholars) who had joined the movement (among them Professor Rabbani, the present leader of the Jamiat-é-Islami party). This rift is still being felt in the resistance. When it occurred, in 1975, many young Islamists were imprisoned by Daoud and later executed under Taraki. The others opted for exile and returned only after the peasant uprising for which, since 1980-81, they have supplied the cadres.

These modernist and reformist young Islamists are political people. They have tried to organize the resistance in two ways. On the one hand, they have set up a guerrilla army by creating permanent mobile groups trained right in Afghanistan and led by cadres. On the other hand, they have placed the civilian population under a political organization, each village with its committee that includes a religious judge, an administrator, and a "political commissar," as well as an auxiliary group, rather poorly armed and responsible for village security and protection against possible attack.

Through their alliance with the Ulemas, these young Islamists were able to become dominant in the north. The Ulemas were scarcely involved in politics before the war but were highly respected by the population. After the Soviet invasion, in many instances they initiated the revolt but were generally not able to set up a political organization. What the Ulemas cared about was Moslem law, the Shariat—that is, the management of civilian society. What the young Islamists cared about was waging the war and politics. The tasks therefore were divided between them: the young activists attended to the party and warfare, the Ulemas to civilian life.

The traditional dignitaries in the north (the elders of the Khan and Malek tribes and landowners) lost all their power and took refuge in Peshawar (which explains why the refugees one meets there are precisely those who are not representative of the resistance, since they have fled). This flight of the old dignitaries enabled the Islamists and the Ulemas to bring about, within the framework of Moslem law, the minimum set of reforms the peasants expected. (It should be added that in Afghanistan, unlike in Iran, the members of the clergy were never large landowners.) These reforms are more modest but more realistic than those of the Communist regime and at any rate much closer to the peasant's image of social justice. They abolish interest and usury but retain private property, provide for a fixed and precise fiscal system (5–10 percent taxation on the products of the land, plus a tax on capital). In addition, the dual control by the political cadres on the one hand and by the Ulemas on the other ensures civil justice under Ulema rule. This protects the peasant against arbitrariness—something that is always possible under a military resistance chief.

ALL THIS SHOWS that the situation is more complex than the caricature usually drawn by the media, for which there are several explanations. To get a more valid picture, one has to go into the field, which is far away. Afghanistan is not Beirut, where everything can be observed from the terrace of the Intercontinental. And then, we carry in our heads a series of clichés about the Afghans and Moslems generally. There are the right-wing clichés—proud, turbaned warriors—and the left-wing clichés—obscurantist, fanatical peasants—and the two, incidentally, are not so far apart. And the Afghanistan war is somewhat embarassing to many people, because it forces one to admit that the U.S.S.R. is waging a colonialist war, and this raises many questions, especially for certain people on the left.

The resistance indeed is so pugnacious and so effective precisely because it does not fit the mold that allegedly characterizes it, especially in the north. (And it should be noted, once again, that in the tribal areas, especially in the southeast, the situation is slightly different.) Surely, the Afghanistan war is not a vestige of the Middle Ages; it is a present-day war.

*Translated from the French by* HELEN KATEL □

---

**Re: Letters**

- Dissent *welcomes letters, but we must ask that they be kept within bounds, about 225 words. They must be typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.*
- *Thank you for your kind cooperation.* □

---



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Karen Rosenberg

# An Autumnal Love of Emma Goldman

The Emma Goldman on T-shirts is our contemporary. With "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution," she announced preoccupation with life-style. Her reputation as a sexually liberated woman was secured by Doctorow's *Ragtime*, and Maureen Stapleton sold her in *Reds* as an early, prescient critic of the Soviet state. For some in the women's movement, she's almost a cult figure.

But the film *Anarchism in America* contains a 1934 newsreel with a different Emma: a Victorian, but without a corset. Her appearance reminds us that anarchism is a quintessentially 19th-century philosophy—in the age of Wagner it relied on the beneficent power of the unfettered individual. A box of Goldman's letters recently given to Radcliffe College confirms that anarchism's last international spokeswoman, if avant-garde, was not quite "modern." Her private tone is reminiscent of sentimental novels of the Romantic era.

In her autobiography *Living My Life* Goldman projected the image of the tough, independent woman she wanted to be: the person who looked forward to prison as a place to rest and catch up on reading. The frankness of her memoirs was partly a pose; honesty was a central quality of her public persona—but she set limits on it. The story in these letters is not told in *Living My Life*. What did she want to hide? An involvement in a banal triangle, her dependence on a married, provincial businessman, one Leon Malmed, a curly-haired Russian-Jewish emigré 12 years her junior.

They met in 1897 when anarchism was still alive in immigrant America and this Albany shopkeeper was one of the "young enthusiastic comrades" eager to aid the cause. In the first decade of the new century, she had him distribute her journal *Mother Earth* and arrange her lectures in upstate New York—which he did while running a deli with his wife, a woman with no anarchist sympathies and considerable jealousy about his relationship with Red Emma. His energy was remarkable, but Goldman took it for granted, treating him like a foot soldier in the anarchist ranks, upbraiding him occasionally. Yet what kept him going was attraction to this severe, dynamic woman as much as devotion to an deology. "I am so glad that my visit awakened your old spirit which for so long had been paralysed [sic] by the humdrum of business," she wrote him. Her cry of liberty was not an abstract ideal for him, and when she called him a beautiful soul trapped by the daily grind of money-making and family chores, he acted. He joined Goldman and her lover Ben Reitman on a cross-country lecture tour in 1915, over the protests of his wife.

It was then that Emma confronted this young man's ardor: in Los Angeles, he asked, and she refused. Later, turning to him for money, she wrote, "I do hope, dear Leon, you'll not think I am taking advantage of your affections . . . though I cannot respond to you the way you feel for me, you are nevertheless very very precious to me. I told you at the depot you are in my heart for the rest of my life." Her warmth took the form of advice. She suggested that he end the constant conflicts with his wife by moving out.

But for a woman who advocated freedom, Goldman was burdened and, ironically, anarchism was her trap: "Even in the work I am doing I find it sapping out all my energies and haven't the time to commune with myself. . . ." Her friendliness to Leon was partially based on identification with his situation. "In a measure you and I are in the same misery, you have been tied by a store, I by the office, it's time we both got free," she observed. If he had a troublesome spouse, she had a difficult husband of sorts. One cannot serve two Gods, she reminded him, and "I am wedded to a God that holds me tight and will not let me go." As a thinker attuned to the exploitation of women, she must have understood what it meant to call herself anarchism's wife.

One of her problems was that the movement to which she was married was ailing. Galas to raise funds for *Mother Earth* lost money. With the split in libertarian ranks caused by the defection of the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin to the Allied war effort, her opposition to World War I as an imperialist venture became more controversial. However, the Russian Revolution picked up spirits and soon her trial for antidraft agitation overshadowed other concerns. "Should the worst come to the worst, and I am prevented from seeing you again before I am deported," she wrote Malmed, "I know we will meet in our beloved *Matushka* [dear mother], Russia."

Enter *Reds*. In November 1920 Goldman sent Malmed a note from Petrograd, "I still feel that I know Russia too little for any profound estimate of what is going on in the country." Later she con-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fessed she had not wanted to believe what the secret police was doing. In '21 she fled and prepared articles critical of the Soviet regime for the *New York World*; they alienated both those anarchists who remained sanguine about bolshevism and those who disapproved of publishing in the mainstream press. Did Leon too reproach her for these reasons, is that why he hadn't answered her letters, she inquired from Berlin. No, he had never received them. Faithful he remained, to her and her version of the creed.

AT THIS POINT BEGAN what was perhaps Emma Goldman's hardest period. Exiled from America, she was inactive, that is, by her standards. In Europe, the authorities deprived her of her natural medium, public speaking, and she was forced to engage in the solitary occupation of writing. She begged to be told she was still needed, loved. Lonely in Berlin in '23, she responded with new passion to Leon's old affection.

> Your letter was like a ray of light from a dark sky. Not because you are willing to assist me when I ask your help, but because of the spirit which permeates your letter. It was like the old, old days when you were always so responsive and so devoted. I have not heard from a living soul in such a warm, beautiful tone as your letter carried to me.

Forbidden to enter the U.S., she reminded him "how foolish it would be for either of us to entertain much hope of coming closer than we have been so far." But if letters were not enough for him, they did not fulfill her either. "One in my desperate position can not be satisfied only with the knowledge that friends think of one, one must have the living contact or die."

England was better, for she was allowed to lecture on Ibsen and other dramatic rabble-rousers, but her opposition to the Bolsheviks alienated many British radicals. The lack of anarchists also distressed her. "Even during the general strike I could find no one who would help me with a manifesto," she complained. So in 1926 she decided to try a Canadian lecture tour. In November she wrote Malmed from Montreal that she had gotten an apartment only for their reunion. It is a luxury, she admitted, but "I have always found that only extravagant and 'crazy' people know the meaning and mystery of life and love." Her next letter opens with "My beloved." Later she described the transition: "something elemental broke loose in my soul, eraced [sic] all that went before and kindled a fire and wild passion I have not known in years."

Since spontaneity was a cornerstone of the anarchist creed, Goldman couldn't admit she had planned the tryst well. "As I have already written you, I always carried you in my heart as a dear comrade, a loving friend. But never did I think of you in any other sense until the week you were here." (What about their earlier search for an apartment?) She told Malmed that the change in her attitude was irrational, as love and lust are: "miracles take their own time and place when they descend on you and then all is blotted out."

On her earlier trip across North America, there had been Reitman, but this time she had no constant companion. She came to Leon with the same desires, even the same veiled, Victorian love talk she had shared with Ben: "I am longing for the fountain of life, I want to drink from it to the last drop." She was not impressed by Leon's faithfulness to her during her trip to Toronto; she had known much longer abstinence. "Do you think it is a test of a great love if a man goes without sexual gratification for 3 weeks?" she asked, pointedly.

GOLDMAN NEEDED a comrade as well as a lover, and Malmed was that, too. She was especially needy at this time, for she knew before she set sail that "there is no movement in America now." Upon arriving in Montreal she saw that Yiddish and English anarchist meetings were poorly attended. She had had a following; now at least she had a follower. Malmed was Goldman's twilight love, not just because their sexual relationship began when she was 57 and he 45, but because it rose as anarchism declined, the personal substituting for the political. She was disturbed at the rise of communism and dismayed that her comrades in Canada knew and cared so little about her or her work. "Yes, my heart is sad and heavy, the future blacker than ever. But there is one star on the horizon, it is my newly born love for you. . . ."

In Leon she had more than a lover and comrade, she had a son. The maternal theme was prominent in Goldman's former love affairs, as Alice Wexler argues in her forthcoming book, *Emma Goldman: A Radical in America*; it was present in Emma's relationship to Leon early on. "I joked when I said I want to be your mother. But the idea of you being my father is even more ridiculous," she wrote him in '15. By '26 it was no longer a joke: "I feel like Sarah to whom a son came in old age." He is her "savage boy," "my wild boy." "Oh my lover, my own child, every nerve in me crys [sic] out for you," she exclaimed. The idea of his being a father to her is also not ridiculous now. She signed her letters "Your *Maidele*," Yiddish for "little girl." And once, "Your *Maidele* who is your mother."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Love was not always compatible with work. "You'll have to share me with the platform, it is your only rival," she warned Leon, but when he would come to visit, she promised, "for 1 whole week I will be a strict monogamist." By late March, however, she asserted, "I find that business on your side and propaganda struggle on mine do not tend to keep up the fires of love, they sap one out completely." The next day she concluded, "Under such conditions a great love cannot thrive."

What she wanted was for Malmed to leave his business (now real estate), wife and children, and to come with her to Europe to help her fill the void she faced there. Readmission to the U.S. was impossible, lectures in Canada could not support her. What was he to do on the continent? Love her, take care of her. "I never had the devotion which would delight in doing things for me, for me the woman and not merely the public person," she said poignantly.

She tempted him with erotic visions of their life together, describing "dreams about mad delights I want to give you in every nerve and the fountain of life would rise to the very sky." She cajoled, imploring him to throw off his financial obligations, "the terrible vulgarity that pierces your sensitive spirit." She taunted him: "Has my Leon loved me 25 years only because I seemed unattainable?" She asked, "What will come of our autumnal love, a love of greater sweep and elemental force than any love of spring?"

When he hesitated, her tone became harsh. "I am neither jealous nor envious, but it does seem strange to me that with all your great love you are so terrorized by your 'home.' " Of course, she was both jealous and envious, but how hard it was for an ideological opponent of those emotions to admit to them.

It was some of the better rhetoric of a professional propagandist who was arguing, not empathizing—though she could have identified with the fear of boredom, of being cut off from friends and family, which Leon must have felt on considering emigration. After all, she had rejected a similar proposal. When he had suggested that she accept his money and remain in Canada so he could visit her often, she had dismissed the idea: "I have been independent all my life." Even if he could afford to keep her, which she doubted, "I cannot imagine anything more humiliating and insulting. I just could not do it."

"There are days when I feel about our love as I feel about our movement, both are too beautiful to take root in an ugly world," she despaired. The end was in sight. The discovery of her letters by Malmed's wife gave Goldman an opportunity to vent deep rage. She screamed at being caught up in a petty marital battle that might become a newspaper scandal. As a public figure she had to be especially careful, she chided him. Soon came the sexual reproaches ("With you the physical response is nothing at all when you care for a person. In fact it seems to be easy even if you do not care for the woman much"), familiar signals of the death of an affair. Finally he fell into the class of former lovers. When he didn't contribute to the fund for her autobiography, she wrote him, "It is funny, the two men who have not responded are the men who have been most in my life, Ben Reitman and Leon Malmed." In February 1928 she set off for France.

GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE of Malmed in Goldman's life, it's curious that she is so silent about him in her memoirs. He appears only twice, as her "romantic admirer" during the 1915 speaking tour, and in 1919 as "my troubadour of many years" who sent a pink rambler rose plant to the Missouri Penitentiary where she was serving time for conspiring to violate the Draft Act. In the book she called him Leon Bass so as not to hurt his application for citizenship. But few things that involved Red Emma escaped the U.S. government and Malmed was reminded of his gift in naturalization court. American citizenship was denied him—he too paid for anarchist beliefs, and for this romance.

The high cost of this love was one reason it did not figure in Emma's memoirs. She told Leon she didn't write of their Canadian trysts because she didn't want to upset his wife, but undoubtedly she was guarding herself against scandal and sparing her own feelings as well. Her pain expressed itself as anger. She blamed him for the fact that it all ended badly: "I can now understand it was largely due to your business and schemes obsession which had so jarred on my nerves." She was relieved, she said, when she heard he suffered losses in the stock-market crash because that might free him from his commercial chains.

Goldman squelched any idea of a continuation of the romance upon her return to Canada, for by then she'd be sixty, "conscious of my age and the ever present thought that I am likely to make a fool of myself." Although her discomfort with sexuality in older women dates her, she was avant-garde enough to act despite inhibitions, and when she returned to Toronto in 1934, she became involved with another young admirer, Frank Heiner. To Malmed she wrote, "He helped to give me the most perfect weeks I have had in many years."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE REUNION between Leon and Emma in '34 was not a happy one. He did not live up to her ideal of liberty—he carried his family and financial anxieties with him. She blamed him for treating her like an institution, not a person. "You are in love with your love for me. Not with me," she stated accusingly. Indeed, the solicitude with which he saved her letters suggests historical as well as romantic interest, but it must have been hard to forget that one's "*Maidele*" was the infamous Emma Goldman, especially when she found it so difficult to shed her public role.

> Dearest Leon, life is strange and cruel [she wrote him in '34]. "At least my life always pulls me away when I long most for warmth and affection. Verily ideals are hard masters. One pays so high for them. I often think the price is far beyond the reward or even satisfaction one derives from complete consecration to the ideal. Well, it is too late to lament that, since our ideal and the need to serve it is so much in my blood. I could not eredicate [sic] it if I tried.

If Malmed lacked Goldman's relentless dedication to principles, he had a quality she lacked: trusting optimism, which read victory in anarchism's decline. He was not discouraged when Goldman—permitted to return to the States for a brief visit in '34—was greeted as a curiosity from the past. If Emma's views seem less radical now, he told an Albany newspaper, it's because the world has changed, not she. Surely it was with pride and devotion that he brought her to Albany to lecture, as he had done years before. The *Knickerbocker Press* reported innocently, "Among the committee members of the Albany Radical Club, sponsoring the event, was Leon Malmed, Broadway store proprietor, who has been a friend of Miss Goldman for the last three decades."

In the autumn of anarchism, Goldman was drawn to a man who could offer her some consolation, but perhaps she unconsciously chose one who would not make a permanent home with her. In '36, predictably enough, she was in Barcelona with the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War. In '39, back in Canada, she wrote to Leon, "The Anarchists here [in Canada] are as dead as a doornail," but that only made her work harder to save four Italians who were being tried for the possession of subversive literature. She died of a stroke in 1940, the eternal warrior. And what career soldier brings a spouse to the world's battlefields?

---

I wish to thank Ian Ballantine and the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College for permission to quote from unpublished material by Emma Goldman. □

J. J. Conley

# Research Cutbacks & Corporate Squeeze

American academia has become the scene of a kind of ideological warfare. Although the confrontation affects the humanities and other disciplines, the principal battlefield is the domain of the empirical social sciences.

The self-confidence of the social sciences in the 1960s has given way to despair in the '80s. For several years, the social sciences have been subject to draconian cutbacks in federal funding. And now, within the various social sciences, pure theorists of both the left and right are calling for the abandonment of the empirical methods of research that were developed since World War II. Scholars in psychology, sociology, political science, and economics are affected by a crisis of self-confidence within and external reductions of support for basic research from without. The healthy nonacademic job markets in economics and some areas of the other fields (for instance, industrial psychology) should not obscure the severe crises these fields are experiencing. Professional publications are filled with discussions of the immediate effects of reductions in support, but (perhaps because of their training as observers of other people's actions) social scientists have been slow to speak out on the larger implications of their disciplinary crises.

Complaints about cutbacks in research funding may be seen as petty at a time when unemployment is rampant and breadlines return to the American scene. And some social scientists seem to believe that a low profile is the best strategy for weathering professional hard times. At another level, however, the disciplinary crises have serious political and cultural implications that affect far more than the careers of individual scholars.

Taming the social sciences has become a priority of rightists both within and outside the Reagan administration. They have begun to implement a joint corporate-government effort to smother the critical element in the social sciences, in history and the humanities. That effort to tame academic social criticism is put forward in two ways. First, federal funding now is used to discourage research in areas potentially critical of the present social structure, and to encourage instead neoconservative viewpoints. Second, corporations are develop-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing patronage systems for scholars that will ensure their ideological pliability.

The tilting of funding priorities along ideological lines is being carried out swiftly and efficiently. The federally induced "downsizing" of major public universities such as Berkeley, Michigan, and Wisconsin involves disproportionately large cuts for leading departments in empirical social research. Federal funding agencies now tend to adopt standards that specifically exclude types of research that may be "tainted" by liberalism. The Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration has stated that it will henceforth fund no "social" research. "Social" is defined by the August 1981 research program announcement as

> large-scale social conditions or problems (e.g., poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing and slums, divorce, day care arrangements, accidents, and criminal behavior); social classes and groups and their interrelations; the structure and function of groups, institutions, or societies; social roles and career determinants; cultural beliefs and values; the legal or educational systems; game theory and decision-making; sociolinguistics; and animal models of social structure and interactions.

In their zeal to proscribe all social research, the Reagan functionaries appear to have placed beyond the pale even the ideologically compatible perspective of sociobiology! Other agencies are more discriminating. The National Institute on Education, for instance, has made studies of voucher systems, home study, and the negative effects on child discipline of school desegregation its explicit research priorities. And throughout the social sciences, complaints are heard that review boards of federal funding agencies are being reshuffled. In many cases new appointments to these boards are apparently being made on the basis of conservative credentials.

THE NEW ORDER is not merely a recasting of research priorities from liberal to conservative biases. The Reagan administration is suffused with hostility to the gathering and dissemination of social data. Federal cuts in the funding of the Census and national surveys threaten the public's ability to monitor social and economic change. The "drive against data" culminated in May 1982 when David Stockman ordered the abolition of the Statistical Policy branch, the central office for federal statistical planning. Knowledgeable observers are divided about the proportions of ignorance and design motivating the federal statistical curtailments, but many of the cuts appear to serve the purposes of the New Right. A list of specific cuts given in the June 1982 issue of *American Statistician* shows that the most severely affected are the projects gathering data on wages and income, family size, housing, and working conditions; other cuts have jeopardized the accuracy of the Consumer Price Index. The restoration of a portion of statistical funding in October 1982 has not affected the majority of the initial cuts, which remain in force.

As federal support for social research declines, corporate patronage systems for scholars are expanding. While federal funding is cut back to free-standing private "think tanks" in the social sciences (such as Rand, Brookings and Abt), we see an increase in corporate support of individual "hired gun" consultants and conservative foundations (such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation). Corporations are putting influential scholarly economists on retainers that greatly exceed their academic salaries (*New York Times*, June 12, 1982). When several prominent academicians at Harvard, Stanford, M.I.T., and Yale earn more than $100,000 a year as corporate consultants, there is reason for concern about direct corporate influence on professional and intellectual decisions.

The new corporate scholars are engaged to "tell the company's story." William F. Buckley has argued that the background of corporate scholars "would need to be investigated" to ensure that they would have no tendency "to bite the hand that feeds them." Corporate and semicorporate largesse is also expanding in graduate education. Plans have been suggested that would link private-sector support of graduate education with later employment opportunities for "corporate scholars" (*Newsweek*, June 14, 1982). Under these plans, postdoctoral work at GE or DuPont might become a part of the typical academic life cycle.

If William F. Buckley had his way, the most pliable corporate scholars would eventually be given academic positions, replacing scholars (in cases of death or retirement) who are "invincibly ignorant" of the truth of the New Right.

> Why not think in terms of 500 young scholars, integrated into the corporate scene, having a look around, and, in due course, rejoining the academies as vacancies occur?
>
> Corporations, for all that they have shown great ignorance of academic subversion of American institutions, are perhaps closer now than they have been at any time in the past generation to recognizing that the intellectual battle needs to be fought very tenaciously.

Buckley's dreams should not be confused with the immediate intentions of federal and corporate plan-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ners. But his views are not without influence. Nor is he alone in his analysis of the university's role.

There is nothing inevitable about the success of any part of the emerging rightist plan to subordinate academia. With effort, it may be possible to halt and reverse this threat to intellectual freedom. Yet it is surely unwise to pretend that the threat does not exist. The funding shifts now are in progress, and public advocacy of the political restructuring of whole disciplines has begun. Scholars cannot afford to practice a benign neglect of their own disciplines. □

Jay Weiser

## Caesar's Hour

Sid Caesar and his band of comic players (Carl Reiner, Howard Morris, and Imogene Coca, Nanette Fabray or Janet Blair) ruined Saturday-night business in theaters and movie houses. They burst onto TV in 1949, and continued through eight years of the *Admiral Broadway Revue*, *Your Show of Shows*, and *Caesar's Hour*. They churned out a live show 39 times a year, playing anything from a Bavarian clock to an opera troupe. Their work is still funny, and sometimes amazing: *Towers Trot*, a musical take-off, runs 45 minutes, features nine sets, and has over 50 in its cast. It was written, rehearsed, and performed (without cue cards) in a week. Caesar recently selected about 50 hours of favorite sketches for a retrospective at the Museum of Broadcasting in New York. This was the first time that most of this material had been available to the public since its performance.

Caesar's shows were created mainly by first-generation American Jews in their 20s. The writers included Caesar himself, Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart, Woody Allen, and Mel Tolkin (later of *All in the Family*). In the 1950s, for the first time, Jews asserted themselves to mainstream society. Caesar's programs were part of the flowering that included Saul Bellow, Arthur Miller, and the New York intellectuals.

*Your Show of Shows* sketches are usually funnier than *Caesar's Hour* sketches, but less interesting. In the *Caesar's Hour* sketches, with control of the program for the first time, Caesar changed his form. He did extended pieces, running 20 minutes or more. The comedy became less behavioral and more allegorical.

Most of Caesar's humor was not overtly Jewish, despite occasional outbursts of Yiddish. It more subtly explored life between two cultures through the themes of role-playing, inarticulateness, and loss.

The creators of the series, who grew up during the Depression, were tasting prosperity for the first time, less than 10 years after the Holocaust. Over the years, you can watch their embourgeoisement: Caesar and Fabray live better than Caesar and Coca. The characters struggle with the contradictions between middle-class expectations and their lives but usually can't resolve them. They stay locked in their roles. Caesar's characters act macho, but they end up as emotional wrecks or their wives rebel. In one monologue, Caesar gradually falls apart after coming home to find his wife gone. He thinks she's left him; she has really gone shopping. As soon as she comes in, his imperturbable facade goes back up. When Coca plays Caesar's wife, she pursues refinement with a vengeance, but can never quite prevail. When Fabray plays Caesar's wife, she is enraged by the norms that leave her with all the housework and no freedom. When she screams, "From now on, we are going to have fun!" she strikes terror in your heart.

The silent movies suggest that middle-class life is a tenuous thing, and that a single slip will send the edifice crashing down. In *A Drunk There Was*, Caesar tastes success (he gets a raise, his wife is pregnant, his canary lays eggs) until one drink turns him into an alcoholic (ironically, Caesar's own difficulties with success had already turned him into an alcoholic). Coca fares little better: when she is not playing angelic girls with a habit of dying at the end, she plays irredeemable vamps.

The only happy couples are in the contemporary movie parodies, presumably because the movies, to Caesar's generation, were dreams. Of course, the couples are crazy. In a 1967 parody of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Caesar and Coca are outrageous slobs; in *Bullets over Broadway*, Fabray's cheap chanteuse wins Reiner's foppish academic, leaving the viewer to imagine their life together.

Inarticulateness is half of Caesar's comedy. He spent his youth in the multilingual environs of his parents' Yonkers cafeteria, and has always had trouble expressing himself verbally. The lurking suspicion in his work is that words, and the values that are communicated with them, are meaning-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less. In the foreign-movie parodies, the characters speak in a gibberish that sounds like a language but isn't. In the silent movies, language disappears entirely, leaving melodramatic gesture. The only glib Caesar character is the Professor, whose field of expertise changes, but who never knows what he is talking about.

Inarticulateness is also a metaphor for the problem of bridging two cultures. As Moose the gangster in *Bullets over Broadway*, Caesar can barely talk; he lows. He can never satisfy Fabray, who wants couth. In an *On the Waterfront* parody, Caesar's Brando communicates mainly by shifting his weight: his brother the union racketeer has told him not to talk. He struggles toward intelligibility. By the end of the sketch, he still has trouble putting a sentence together, but he has decided to talk. He walks into the sunset with the educated and refined Fabray.

If the child of immigrants learns to act like an American, what has he gained? Not much, in the Caesar lexicon. In *A Drunk There Was*, Caesar struggles back from alcoholism, only to find that because of his past, his daughter Fabray cannot marry Reiner, the man she loves. Caesar has to give her up. In *Towers Trot*, he is an Astaire-like dancer with an appetite for creativity. Unfortunately, that translates into an appetite for food as well (as it did with Caesar, who went from 180 pounds to 240 pounds between 1949 and 1957), and he becomes a blimp unable to work. He gets his weight down again, but ends up as an effeminate dancer at a dime-a-dance parlor. He finally makes it back to the big time after admitting that he really isn't creative at all.

ALL THE THEMES are brought together in *Aggravation Boulevard*, a travesty of the life of John Gilbert. Caesar is Rex Handsome, king of silent films. Without a word, he struts into the studio to play a love scene. Talkies come in, and the scene has to be redone. But Rex's voice, which we hear for the first time, is a falsetto. His career is ruined, his pretensions are shattered, until he discovers that when he catches a cold, he speaks in a mellifluous bass. *Aggravation Boulevard* is perfect Caesar: language (here, Rex's voice) obscures meaning, roles are trashed, and the only way to accommodate is by giving up something of yourself. You can succeed if you're willing to go through life with a cold.

*Aggravation Boulevard* is an eerie reflection of Caesar's fears. In *Where Have I Been?*, his autobiography, he says that during his heyday he believed that all the acclaim was unreal, that he would be found out as having no talent, and that his career would crash. He made his nightmare real by binging on booze and pills for 30 years, before pulling himself together in 1978. But *Aggravation Boulevard* also expresses the fears of his generation, living well in the American mainstream and wondering if it was real. □

---

AT FIRST GLANCE *(Continued from page 275)*

---

"red vote" in Italy. The CP is still a powerful factor in Italian politics, to be sure, but it rather resembles more and more a prewar Social Democratic party than a Leninist vanguard. When the local and provincial parties recently selected their delegates to the 16th national PCI congress in Milan, the pro-Soviet slates won a mere 5 percent of the seats.

The European Communist movement is either dead or dying. The tide has receded and is most unlikely to ever reverse its course. The Communist mortgage on the labor movement has been lifted. This is a development of world-historical significance. For the first time in many decades European socialists now can seize the day, provided they have the imagination and the guts to do so. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Juan E. Corradi

# A Culture of Fear

SALVADOR, by Joan Didion. New York: Simon & Schuster. 198 pp. $12.95.

In places where life is reasonably ordered, the violence that rages in the Third World is masked by a propensity to integrate it in some favorite sequence of meaning. For those beholden to a vision of gradual progress, such violence is a temporary sickness, a malady of growth. To those who honor revolution, it is a phase of dialectics—the birth pang of the new. It is rarely, if ever, depicted as a terrifying impasse, as horror, a catastrophe of meaning. The politician's speech, the journalist's story, the social scientist's account do not reach the "heart of darkness." Only a writer in full command of her craft can recreate it on the page. Joan Didion's *Salvador*, a lean and splendid book, pierces ideological fictions and takes us to the outer and almost unbearable limits of what we call "politics," "society," and "culture"—to the point where those rational notions turn into terror, obscenity, and hallucination.

Descent into the culture of fear is abrupt. Upon landing at an airport designed to service hotels that were abandoned and tourists who would not come, Joan Didion was immediately confronted with the machinery of terror and enveloped by the atmosphere of anxiety in which it basks. "The only logic is that of acquiescence," she reports. But compliance is no guarantee of security. From the immense distance of definitions, terror appears as the arbitrary use, by organs of political authority, of severe coercion against individuals or groups, the credible threat of such use, or the arbitrary liquidation of such individuals and groups. But from the writer's notes something more ominous makes itself felt that defies all definitions: a process of corrosion that eats the soul as relentlessly as it consumes bodies.

During her two-week stay, Didion's every move was colored by an apprehension that, like pain, became at moments excruciating. She recalls an evening when she and her husband were sitting on a porch by candlelight, against a backdrop of shadowy night raiders. "Nothing came of this, but I did not forget the sensation of having been in a single instant demoralized, undone, humiliated by fear, which is what I meant when I said that I came to understand in El Salvador the mechanism of terror."

Terror shapes behavior to exact obedience; it molds attitudes to obtain servitude. Terror disorients; it deprives us of the opportunity to foresee the consequences of our actions; it paralyzes the will; it even freezes time. In El Salvador this process is not confined to particular kinds of behavior. It engulfs the whole of life: "terror is the given of the place." It is total.

IF THIS SHORT BOOK seems bottomless, it is because Joan Didion's phrases bring forth the peculiar state of hypnotic abeyance that is the essence of terror. She achieves this effect through the careful notation of detail and the unabated watchfulness over language. She refuses both analysis and synthesis, she rejects abstractions and eschews conclusions. Instead, she reports on these as discursive operations performed by near and distant actors while they seek to mask, or neutralize, or routinize a truth that is everywhere in evidence but impossible to face: objective and abject, like a corpse.

Cadavers (from *cadere*, to fall) are to be found anywhere, at any time, in El Salvador—a standard feature in the landscape of fear, to remind the provisionally living that they too might fall at any moment. For everyone in El Salvador is, ineluctably, a hostage. Cadavers are produced by a government that is little more than a deranged killing machine (Didion reports that American



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bureaucratese tries helplessly to obscure, in Washington and *in situ*, "what is taken for granted in El Salvador, that government forces do most of the killing"). The bodies are broken, disfigured, trussed and stuffed with their own organs, rearranged as if designed to carry a message. But the message is undecipherable, beyond anything that even Kafka's Harrow could inscribe in the flesh of the inmates of the Penal Colony. They are mere tokens that saturate the environment, suggesting that life at some point became the stuff of an obscure and debased coinage.

When Joan Didion paints the paraphernalia of terror—the vehicles, uniforms, weapons, the methods of extrajudicial execution, the dumping sites, the local words that are as twisted as the bodies ("detention" for kidnapping, "incident" for massacre, "high-strung" and "youthful" for murderous, and the verb "to disappear" which, as she notes, has become transitive)—the effect is not mysterious, as in a *chiaroscuro*, but hyperreal. She does not give us a plot to unravel, an interpretive key to unlock the horror, a solution: "This was a story that would perhaps not be illuminated at all." She keeps the narrative on a plane where incidents and objects multiply and cram the space. The only rule that governs situations seems to be the lewd proliferation of the lurid. "Outside in the parking lot there were a number of wrecked or impounded cars, many of them shot up, upholstery chewed by bullets, windshield shattered, thick pastes of congealed blood on pearlized hoods."

Joan Didion tells us something about terror that escapes other accounts and most analyses, namely, that it is *obscene*, for obscene is anybody and anything that has lost distance, perspective, a sense of its own limits, something exiled from its natural conditions of meaning, radically out of context.

> These are the details—the models and colors of armored vehicles, the makes and calibers of weapons, the particular methods of dismemberment and decapitation used in particular instances—on which the visitor to Salvador learns immediately to concentrate, to the exclusion of past or future concerns, as in a prolonged amnesiac fugue.

There is a linguistic supplement to this plethora of abjections: it is comprised of fragments from the discourse of the actors—fragments from President Magaña and from President Reagan, from present Ambassador Hinton and former Ambassador White, from embassy officials, Salvadoran officers, from the grandson of a legendary dictator, from nuns and priests and university professors. Didion places the quotations side by side, or next to the brute facts of life and death, so skillfully that, without recourse to commentary, they testify to the mendacious loquacity of a condition where language is called upon, most of the time, not to illuminate truth but to dream it as it ought to be, to improve its appearance, to formulate ramshackle mythologies, to lure us into the realm of shadowboxing, of pure symbolic action.

Joan Didion depicts the foreign media in El Salvador as prone not to notice that their scoops of reality are actually artifacts already staged for an audience. She depicts the local actors as persons who seek to solve a problem by changing its name. To distinguish factual from wishful statements becomes impossible—a realization that leads her to see the Latin American writer García Marquez "in a new light, as a social realist."

The official language of El Salvador, and the official language of Washington on El Salvador, is the language of advertising—the obsessive insistence on making things look right, like turning hoodlums into good guys, terror into nascent democracy, social putrescence into new life—"which is part of the place's pervasive obscenity." Nothing escapes the rhetoric of the obscene: accurate information is almost impossible to get; numbers are used to express the ineffable; statistics only add a veneer of verisimilitude to the absurd; things and situations are named and renamed a thousand times.

From Joan Didion's angle of vision, the American predicament in El Salvador is ultimately sad. The U.S. has become a hostage to its mythology and tied to the last gasp of a shabby local power structure that has irretrievably lost all legitimacy and even an image of itself, whose only historic project is to procure weapons and a fabricated political identity from the North. Curiously, America complies. By failing to insist on a plausible political approach, Washington in fact acquiesces to the brutal tactics of the most violent Salvadorans, and paints itself into the corner of an endless war. American officials try to blame a legacy of terror on Soviet arms, talk of dominoes, and grossly overstate the American stakes in the civil war. The Salvadoran power holders know only too well that American aid will continue, and that the present Administration will continue to certify the unbelievable—that progress is somehow taking place in this carnage.

America's fate is to be mocked by its protégés and accused by everyone else. To Didion the affliction is deep-seated, bipartisan, all-American. Her reflections are worth quoting at some length, for they do transcend the necessary but shifting polemics of the moment:



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> That we had been drawn, both by a misapprehension of the local rhetoric and by the manipulation of our own rhetorical weaknesses, into a game we did not understand, a play of power in a political tropic alien to us, seemed apparent, and yet there we remained. In this light all arguments tended to trail off. Pros and cons seemed equally off the point. At the heart of the American effort there was something of the familiar, ineffable, as if it were taking place not in El Salvador but in a mirage of El Salvador, the mirage of a society not unlike our own but "sick," a temporarily fevered republic in which the antibodies of democracy needed only to be encouraged, in which words had stable meanings north and south ("election," say, and "Marxist") and in which there existed, waiting to be tapped by our support, some latent good will.

THERE IS MUCH in this book that will provide ammunition to thoughtful critics of the Reagan administration's policies in Central America. But I should like to suggest that, in the end, this is beside the point. It would be a disservice to Joan Didion's real achievement to reduce her statements to even the most reasoned critical analyses of the current political situation in El Salvador. Even the most lucid political commentary belongs only to the moment. A good book belongs to literature and, as such, survives, triumphs over the occasion of its production. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will be read long after scientific and journalistic texts of the same cohort will have faded into the oblivion of an archive or a newspaper morgue. *Salvador* has the unmistakable aura of true literature in its prosody, in its imagery, its testimony.

Because it is written at a slight angle from more conventional discourses, because it flies too slowly, sometimes too high, some other times too low over that little nation that is smaller than San Diego county but nonetheless commands the attention of the world, this book is strangely remote from the bustle of the moment. It thus hints at other truths than those we negotiate and ingest every day. These other truths are most unpleasant to contemplate, but there are glimpses of them throughout. One of them is the perversity and incoherence of underdevelopment—the centuries of exactions, dependencies, humiliations, insensate ambitions that contributed to the making of El Salvador. The upshot has been an acute fragmentation of group life, purpose, and experience. To call this accretion of time "history" would be to grace it with a unifying meaning that it lacks. Similarly, to call the pseudomorphic city of San Salvador, the broken Indian customs, the borrowed crafts, the short span of expectations, the dim memory of deranged patriarchs "tradition" would be a travesty. "There is a sense in which the place remains marked by the meanness and discontinuity of all frontier history, by a certain frontier proximity to the cultural zero." And to construe the fall of this house of cards as anything but the predictable result of a social earthquake would be an impudent form of ethnocentrism.

Yet ethnocentrism is the main tool with the help of which, by Joan Didion's reckoning, Americans seek to reshape the political and social rubble of El Salvador. She does not say it, but her book strongly implies that the American project is inevitably a failure. It still remains to be seen how disastrous the failure will become and when, if ever, the difficult, long, modest, unglamorous task of founding a history proper to the resources and idiosyncrasies of El Salvador will begin.

The longer view may prevail over short-term crises among local leaderships and peoples, and the United States will not be threatened in its security. It will simply have lost the opportunity to have influenced this evolution by more mature behavior befitting a great power. For America is not only trying to defend actions most unsavory, but worse: it is trying to protect political realities that do not exist. □

Mitchell Cohen

## Salvationist Hope, Terrorist Dictatorship

The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution, by J. L. Talmon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. 632 pp. $35.00.

Surveying the condition of international socialism two decades after it was sundered by World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer wrote of the need to unite "the *ethos* of democratic socialism and the *pathos* of revolutionary socialism." Bauer argued for transcending the dichotomy between reform and revolution, asserting that each possessed something urgent: the need



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to salvage the positive conquests of bourgeois civilization, "the irreplaceable cultural values of individual rights, of intellectual freedom, of the collective right of self-determination, of humanism," on the one hand—and the recognition that capitalism had to be surmounted and not just made palatable, on the other.

Although not directly concerned with Bauer and primarily an examination of two of the most potent forces in modern history—nationalism and revolution—the late J. L. Talmon's *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* ultimately seeks to deny the possibility of an alternative to social democracy and bolshevism as formulated by Bauer. Indeed, "the pathos of revolution" is one of Talmon's great fears. His book focuses on the socialist split into reformist and revolutionary wings, claiming that it was caused by "the difference between, and acceptance of, the historic national community as the natural political-social framework and the vision of a socialist world society achieved by a universal revolutionary breakthrough."

Talmon's book, published posthumously, is the third of a trilogy that represents his life's project. It began, he tells us, in the late 1930s when, as an undergraduate, he pondered the Moscow Trials while studying the Jacobins. How, he asked himself, did great evil emerge from the promise of universal salvation? The parallel between 1937–38 and Year II (1793) of the French Revolution suggested to him "some unfathomable and inescapable law which causes revolutionary salvationist schemes to evolve into regimes of terror, and the promise of a perfect direct democracy to assume in practice the form of totalitarian dictatorship."

Talmon's exploration of this question first took concrete shape as he wrote *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952). Here he proposed that two radically contrasting variants of democratic thought, "liberal democratic" and "totalitarian democratic," emerged from the 18th century. The former views politics as a very human process of trial and error and defines liberty in terms of human spontaneity and the lack of coercion. Consequently, its supporters recognize that politics does not consume all spheres of life. "Totalitarian Messianic democrats," on the other hand, identify liberty with collective purpose, making politics the all-encompassing dimension of existence, yielding "dictatorship resting on popular enthusiasm." Historically, they were not opposed to liberal individualism; rather, they could not stand imperfection in its realization. A natural order of human fulfillment was posited, based ultimately on an "irrational faith" in Rational Man. In the end, this served as a humanist justification for antihuman politics. The "most vital" example of this, in Talmon's judgment, is Marxism.

Writing at a particularly chilly moment in the cold war (1952), Talmon saw much of modern history as "a systematic preparation for the headlong collision between empirical and liberal democracy on the one hand, and totalitarian Messianic democracy on the other, in which the world crisis of today consists." Talmon's sympathies are evident, and in *Political Messianism* (1960) he insisted that "the love of freedom and the yearning for salvation" are irreconcilable. We might best characterize him as a Burkean liberal, although his antimessianism contains, paradoxically, a strong messianic current—a vision of history as a conflict between the Forces of Light and the Forces of Darkness. Indeed, his real concern is not democracy but the contrast between his notion of liberalism and totalitarianism. He finds potential for totalitarianism inherent in mass political mobilization itself; hence his use of the term "totalitarian democracy." However, since democracy and mass mobilization are by no means the same thing, his attempt to counterpose "liberal" and "totalitarian" democracies serves to make the very meaning of the word "democracy" obscure.

It is not, of course, quite that simple. Talmon sees "totalitarian Messianic democracy" in competition both with "empirical liberal democracy" and "the authoritarian systems of the Right." Political messianists—among whom are to be counted Saint-Simon, Marx, Michelet, and Mazzini—share "the totalitarian-democratic expectation" of universal regeneration, "of some preordained, all-embracing and exclusive scheme of things, which was presumed to represent the better selves, the true interests, the genuine will, and the real freedom of men." Where 18th-century "totalitarian democrats" thought of men as atomized individuals, their 19th-century "Romantic Messianic" heirs focused on collectivities. Messianic nationalists and messianic socialists, Talmon notes, frequently employed the same vocabulary, but with one using "the people," while the other used "the proletariat."

Although these two forces were frequently allied before 1848, the revolutions of that year brought out the fundamental tension between them. Finally, liberal nationalists recoiled from their former universalist allies in the messianic left and joined the conservatives in suppressing them. Having developed from the same abstract concepts of human rights and man as did political messianism, liberal-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism "soon discovered the contradiction between the essentially egalitarian idea of the rights of man and the claims of concrete individuality to preserve and assert its particularity." Thus it became repressive when confronted by "the leveling aspirations of Messianic democracy."

IN HIS BOOK *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution*, Talmon carries his argument to its conclusion through an examination of the relation between nationalism and socialism from Marx's time through the rise of fascism. His preface makes clear his understanding of the first half of this century:

> The Bolshevik Revolution came to serve as the new inspiration and model, and Russia as the Promethean guide . . . to all the faithful of the religion of revolution and above all to its practitioners outside Europe. At the other pole, the specter of revolutionary internationalism combined with other stimuli to goad the resentful and frightened devotees of warring integral nationalism in the defeated and discontented nations [after World War I] into totalitarian fascism and racist nazism.

Lenin, on the one hand, and fascism, on the other, proposed two different messages of redemption to compensate for the war, creating what Talmon calls "bastard" syntheses of nationalism and internationalism.

A lengthy discussion of Marx's and Engels's views on nationalism opens the book, arriving at the (in my view correct) conclusion that the two never came to grips with the phenomenon. Concentrating on the contrast between Rosa Luxemburg and Eduard Bernstein, Talmon then presents a remarkable and original rereading of the debate over reform and revolution within German social democracy in light of the national question.

Talmon argues that for Luxemburg the real problem with revisionism was that it ultimately pitted "national local histories against universal history." To follow Bernstein's prescriptions and analyses meant accepting the "concrete data" of the national community as the arena of political activity; the SPD would be just what its name says —the Social Democratic party of Germany, not the German section of international socialism. Luxemburg was a political messianist, "hypnotized by the *Endziel*" (final goal), while for Bernstein the movement, not the final goal, was all. "Was not Rosa's passionate aversion to nationalism," asks Talmon rhetorically, "the mainspring of her vision of the oneness of history . . . instead of her antinationalism being the function of her total commitment to revolutionary internationalism?"

The answer to this question, in my view, is no, and this because Talmon misconstrues Luxemburg on several accounts. In the first place, she focuses not only on the *Endziel* but insists on a dialectic between means and ends: "Can we counterpose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms?" she asks in *Reform or Revolution*. "Certainly not . . . ," she continues. "Between social reforms and revolution there exists for social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution its aim." Whatever power we grant to her messianic impulses, she was not simply the "poet" of the general strike, which Talmon calls her. Her antinationalism is a logical and coherent consequence of an approach to history and society that insists on class as its sole, ultimate reference point. Talmon wants to reduce a class analysis to messianism, a "state of mind."

NO DOUBT, SOCIALIST HISTORY has its share of riders of the apocalypse. This does not mean, however, that all radical theory, including that with varying degrees of messianic impulse, can be explained in terms of a vague, yet apparently all-encompassing "state of mind." Talmon forces history into his own inflexible universalizing scheme—exactly the problem he saw in "totalitarian democrats." He therefore fails to consider that not only the Terror of Year II and the Moscow Trials followed from the promise of universal redemption, but that the "pragmatic" and "empirical" liberal democracy of England emerged from a bloody century of civil war replete with its own messianists. Furthermore, Rousseau, whose concept of the general will embodies the "totalitarian democratic" spirit for Talmon, was at least engaged in a quest (successful or not) for a balance between individual and community, and in fact favored not a "dictatorship resting on popular enthusiasm" but an "elective" aristocracy in *The Social Contract*. And again: Talmon wants to counterpose a "pragmatic," "empirical," Bernstein to an abstract, visionary Luxemburg. Yet what then comes of Bernstein's (mis)appropriation of Kant's categorical imperative as a replacement for Hegelian and Marxist dialectics? Kant's imperative is hardly a pragmatic, and certainly not an empirical principle.

The problem with Talmon's approach is best illustrated by his treatment of the Austro-Marxists, among whom Otto Bauer and Karl Renner developed perhaps the most sophisticated Marxist analyses of nationalism. The multinational character of the Austro-Hungarian empire, in Talmon's account, was a test case for international socialism



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that was failed by the Austrian party (which, by the turn of the century, was structured as a federation of national parties rather than a centralized organization). Talmon devotes some 25 dense, and valuable, pages to the nationalities problem in Austria in general and the Social Democratic party in particular. This is followed by five and a half sketchy pages on what the party's leading theoreticians of the problem had to say about it.

Had he more fully analyzed the writings of Bauer, for example, and integrated them into his analysis of Bauer's politics as a whole, Talmon would have found his own theoretical scaffolding threatened. Bauer's *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907) argued for a cultural and nonterritorial concept of nationality, allowing for the autonomy of many nationalities within a given set of borders. Plainly, this runs counter to state centralism, at least in one domain of life. Similarly, Bauer stridently opposed identifying socialism with etatism: his *Der Weg zum Sozialismus* (1919) envisioned a socialized economy in which branches of industry are run by councils composed of representatives of the workers, the consumers and, to insure the broader collective interest, the state. This presupposes a market socialism rather than a centralized economy with an all-powerful state.

The consistency of Bauer's approach to socialism in general and the nationalities question in particular is evident. He did not accept "the historic national community as the natural political-social framework" while simultaneously insisting on the potent and permanent reality of nationalities and the necessity of working within the parameters of Austria, for example. His socialism aimed to surmount reform capitalism by seeking a third path between reform and revolution—but not through messianic apocalypse or a totalitarian state. Bauer (and the short-lived Second-and-a-half International) provides an outstanding counterexample to Talmon's scheme.

THIS BRINGS US to Talmon's rich, if again problematic, discussion of Russia. After a lengthy examination of the Russian revolutionary tradition, Talmon asks how a "defeatist" internationalist revolutionism could sweep aside "the deep-seated instinctive patriotism" of the Russian people at a time of national emergency in 1917. War and its dislocations as well as the corruption of the Czarist regime are insufficient, he asserts, to explain the regime's collapse and the Bolshevik victory. Rather, the critical factor was "a special frame of mind" rooted in the vision of Holy Russia—a Holy Russia profaned by the Czar himself by this time. The messianic Bolshevik defeatists were victorious because they appeared as the potential purifiers of the corrupted "authentic core," in an apparent ruse of Russian Reason: "The age-old concept of a restoration of pristine purity was replaced in the age of secularism by the image of some preordained future. A purified and reformed Russia was called upon to fulfill the role of Messiah."

And Lenin was this Messiah's prophet, although his revolution produced, in the end, a "bastard synthesis" of messianic Russian nationalism and messianic socialist internationalism. (Talmon's failure to discuss the relation between Leninism and Stalinism here is glaring.) So by 1920 the schism is complete: the Socialist International was composed of devotees of "the nation-state based on democratic reformism" while the Comintern believed "in a Messianic revolution through a violent breakthrough."

TALMON'S EMPHASIS on "frames of mind" reveals the idealist essence of his approach to history and politics. In *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* he wrote that his concern was with "a pattern of mental, emotional, and behavioristic elements best compared to the set of attitudes engendered by a religion." Whatever the impact of economic and other factors, these "all-embracing attitudes" compose "the real substance of history." Indeed, Talmon's history seems to flow from his Idea, which, like Hegel's, works itself out and is finally grasped by him as scholar, looking back. Hence, after discussing how the notions of *la patrie* and *la révolution* merged in the French Revolution, he contends that in modern revolutions (Bolshevik, Chinese, Cuban, and so on) the memories of preceding revolutionary struggles "have proved to be far more potent and more cohesive influences than social-economic doctrines and innovating aspirations."

True, revolutions are not sparked by mass discussion of the theory of combined and uneven development; but if social-economic doctrines don't galvanize, what about social-economic realities? Talmon never tells us what in given historical conditions makes people receptive to messianism or nationalism or socialism. Since the assumption is that "all-embracing attitudes," such as political messianism, are the substance of history, it is hardly surprising that one can read Talmon's account unaware that something called capitalism, for example, might have had an impact on what he is analyzing.

Talmon's conclusions indeed speak of an "unfathomable and inescapable . . . great ironic law"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by which salvationist hope becomes terrorist dictatorship. Talmon almost admits the defeat of his own enterprise here. Although he is clearly an advocate of "pragmatic" and "empirical" liberalism, he nevertheless employs an idealist method of examining history and politics, yielding—after three books and some 1,500 suggestive pages—something ironic, inescapable, and unfathomable. Consequently, while *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* is a work that students of modern history and socialism cannot bypass, its author's method, categories, and presuppositions raise at least as many questions about themselves as they provide answers to the questions he poses. □

Henry C. Fleisher

## The Two Sides of Lyndon Johnson

THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON: THE PATH TO POWER, by Robert Caro. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 882 pp. $19.95.

THE POLITICIAN: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LYNDON JOHNSON, by Ronnie Dugger. New York: W. W. Norton. 514 pp. $18.95.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON: A MEMOIR, by George Reedy. New York and Kansas City: Andrew & McNeel. 159 pp. $12.95.

This year, in November, it will be 20 years since the assassination of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson's ascension to the presidency, and January 22 marked the tenth anniversary of his death, at the age of 64—a frustrated and bitter political has-been living in self-imposed exile from the political scene.

These three new books all seek to make this complex, fiercely energetic man more comprehensible. All three contribute to our understanding, though by no means do they answer all pertinent questions about Johnson. Was he truly a liberal or rather a moneygrubbing conservative? Did he really believe in the principles of the New Deal, or was his support for FDR merely practical politics? Was he prolabor or antilabor? And did he mean what he said? The answers one gleans from these books are, simply, that he was all of these things, but not necessarily at the same time.

What emerges clearly is Johnson's hatred of the meanness and cruelty wrought by poverty. Some of it he himself had suffered in his youth, and he spent the rest of his life ensuring that never again would he or his family be subjected to poverty. He made a great deal of money, and also, at various times and above the call of routine duty, he worked hard and skillfully to help the poor. There was, for instance, his successful effort to establish the Pedernales Electric Cooperative—his nursing its application for a federal Rural Electrical Administration loan, and then persuading Roosevelt to waive REA regulations that stood in its way. More than anyone else, Johnson brought electricity and alleviation of their miserable working and living conditions to the farmers scratching out an existence from the thin soil in the Texas hill country that was part of his congressional district.

• Robert Caro, also the author of a biography of Robert Moses (1974), has spent a good deal of time in Texas gathering material for a trilogy on the life on Lyndon B. Johnson. *The Path to Power*, this first volume, moves from birth through LBJ's early years to the defeat in his first campaign to enter the U.S. Senate in 1941. Caro has prepared a rich bouillabaisse of a story—full of revelations of tasty and obscure facts and anecdotes. Because the book concentrates so heavily on detail, a casual reader may get the impression that it centers only on Johnson's ego, his crassness, his relentless ambition for popularity, wealth, and power. But in fact Caro pays tribute to Johnson's dedication and hard work, and to his genius for the art of politics.

• Ronnie Dugger, an early member of the liberal bloc of Texas Democrats, has been since 1954 the editor and publisher of the *Texas Observer*—the only Texas paper that refused to support Johnson's bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960. Dugger had many opportunities to talk with Johnson, face-to-face. His book makes clear that he considers LBJ at best a fallen liberal and that he distrusted and disliked the man. In the final chapters, Dugger's consuming antagonism seems to extend far beyond mere political opposition. He accepts Nixon's thesis that "World War III began before World War II ended"—and he blames Johnson together with Nixon for "declaring"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

World War III, formally and rhetorically, in the early 1950s. (Presumably it had been "undeclared" until then.) But Dugger goes further. If "human history," he writes, manages to survive a future atomic war, "the global American hawkery of the Johnson period will be understood as a principal cause for World War IV." This certainly must rank high on any list of unprovable theorems. Otherwise, Dugger's book is marked by a sober, if consistently critical, view of Johnson's career.

• George Reedy's book reflects his close working relationship with LBJ throughout much of Johnson's senatorial career, as well as at the beginning and the end of his presidency. Reedy (in his student years a president of the University of Chicago Socialist Club) left a reporter's job at United Press in Washington in 1951 to join Senator Johnson's staff. In the Johnson White House, he became press secretary. He left that post in 1965, and returned as a consultant to LBJ in the last year of his presidency.

Reedy's book recognizes and pays tribute to what he perceives as Johnson's greatness, although his admiration for his boss eventually soured into dislike and distaste. His book, he points out, is neither history nor biography but rather "an exercise in exorcism"—an effort to "get some things off my chest." He does. But he also sheds light on the way Johnson functioned in the public interest. Johnson's most important quality, Reedy avers,

> . . . was that he knew how to make our form of government work. That is an art that has been lost since his passing, and we are suffering heavily as a result. It was a peculiar quality in that it had its limitations. He was not a man of grand design. His ideas were simplistic and amounted to little more than placing economic floors under wages, farm prices and business incomes, plus universal education and medical care and cheap electric power. But he could take ideas from other men and women who were totally incapable of putting them into effect. In his hands, they would be shaped into programs of action. Among our presidents, he should be rated as the master tactician of all times.

Caro notes disapprovingly that Johnson threw few legislative bills into the congressional hopper and made few speeches on the floor of either the House or Senate. The reason was, of course, that he was busy elsewhere, in the Washington and Texas corridors of power where, he correctly felt, he could accomplish much more, for himself and for his constituents. He became increasingly expert at the game of trading, maneuvering, bargaining, cajoling, promising, compromising—and then regrouping for the next effort.

Nowhere are these skills better seen than in Johnson's maneuvers, after a period of watchful waiting, to cut Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin down to size. Early in 1954, Reedy reports, Johnson confided to a few intimates that Jumpin' Joe had "gotten too big for his britches." McCarthy demonstrated the validity of LBJ's assessment a few months later, when he attacked the venerable Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona, the "quintessential establishment Senator." Reedy reports:

> Johnson began a series of huddles with the conservatives, pleading with them to drop their traditional reluctance to censure a senator for nonlegislative conduct. . . . If McCarthy was willing to attack Hayden, he would be willing to attack the Senate itself. . . . The arguments were effective. They moved senator after senator to the anti-McCarthy camp. . . . Joe McCarthy did not realize it, but his most effective shield—the argument that only "left wingers" opposed him—was removed, while he was totally oblivious to what was happening.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1957 was, in Reedy's view, another peak period in the chart of Johnson's political effectiveness. Early in the Eisenhower years, sensing that the Senate's Southern Democrats were becoming "disenchanted" with their long-time coalition with the Senate's Northern Republicans, Johnson came to believe that the Southerners would accept a reasonable legislative proposal in the area of civil rights—providing they could "decide they had been treated in good faith and would therefore go down fighting against overwhelming odds. . . . Legislative victory for civil rights was possible only if they were persuaded that the cost of successful obstruction would be too high."

The basis for compromise was provided, according to Reedy, by an article in the *New Leader* by Professor Carl Auerbach of the University of Minnesota Law School. Auerbach emphasized the difference between, in Reedy's words, "contempt proceedings as punishment, and contempt proceedings to enforce court orders." Using this approach, an amendment to the voting rights bill, drafted by Dean Acheson and his staff, provided for jury trials in criminal contempt proceedings involving the provisions of the proposed law, but civil contempt proceedings would be enforced, in accord with past practice, by the courts without use of juries. With this assurance to the Southern legislators that in the field of voting rights "they can't brand you as a criminal now without a trial before a jury of your



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fellow citizens," the Southern senators had a concept they could live with. Their leaders made the usual speeches of undying opposition, but there was no support for a filibuster against the bill. As Johnson had foreseen, his Southern colleagues could surrender honorably to "overwhelming force" in the legislative process.

Reedy, citing Johnson's handling of this issue, points out that in his greatest moments of self-doubt about having worked for a man as difficult and personally distasteful as LBJ, "I can always go back to the era of McCarthy and the 1957 civil rights debate, and decide that working for him was worthwhile. On both occasions, our society needed him desperately, and on both occasions he came through."

WHEN LYNDON JOHNSON BECAME PRESIDENT, in November 1963, succeeding John F. Kennedy, "he came through" once again with an energetic campaign to persuade Congress to pass the Kennedy program, for which Kennedy himself had not been notably successful in getting approval. And so, under President Johnson's guidance, in 1964, the historic Civil Rights Act was passed, and the Great Society and War on Poverty programs brought about many domestic social improvements. In Johnson's "own" term, however—with which none of these books is concerned—his escalation of the Vietnam War gradually destroyed the effectiveness of the presidency.

Martin Luther King, Jr., a warm supporter of LBJ when he pressed to enlarge the area of civil rights legislation, was now a sharp critic of President Johnson's military program in Vietnam; so were many of his other former adherents. The man who had sought, and nearly achieved, a national consensus behind his election campaign in 1964 was all too soon to see a people divided and angry. Vietnam wrecked Johnson and the Johnson administration. Memories of those wartime years tend to bleach the older memories of his many accomplishments.

There has been a tendency among many writers and political observers to minimize the importance of Johnson's career, perhaps because of its sad, downhill ending, perhaps because so many of his personal characteristics were repellent. His record is heavy with instances of toadying to superiors or those he thought could help him; of bullying and often savage tirades against subordinates; of making friends too easily with yesterday's enemy and making an enemy of yesterday's friend; of his personal gaucheries and often foul tongue; of his preoccupation with personal wealth. During a lifetime career in public service, he parlayed an investment of $17,000, obtained from Lady Bird Johnson's father as an advance on her inheritance, into an Austin radio station and a series of other enterprises that gave him wealth estimated at over $20 million at the time of his death. There was much about Lyndon that wasn't pretty. But he was impressive.

"I've just met the most remarkable young man," Roosevelt said—as Caro tells us—after a day of conversation in 1937 with the new young Texas congressman while their train puffed north from Galveston to Dallas. And, Caro continues, FDR told Tommy (The Cork) Corcoran, a chief aide, "I like this boy, and you're going to help him with anything you can." Johnson was quickly accepted into the circle of brilliant young men in the upper echelons of the New Deal staff.

"We agreed on so many of the big issues. He basically agreed with the liberals," Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas said of LBJ. But, she added, "no one ever knew exactly where he stood." Johnson would have liked that remark. Now, ten years after his death, three good books prove that LBJ still resists being easily categorized. □

The University
of Massachusetts Press

Class and Civil Society:
The Limits of Marxian
Critical Theory

Jean L. Cohen

This impressive analysis of Marxian class theory and discussion of neo-Marxian theories of class "provides a fresh and penetrating argument that is both a political critique of Marxism and a theoretical critique of Marx. . . . I would not be surprised if this tightly argued scholarly treatise became an important source for a post-Marxist Left in America and elsewhere" – Claus Offe, Department of Political Science and Sociology, University of Bielefeld. $22.50

Box 429 Amherst 01004




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Eckstein

# Hitler's Road to Power

WHO VOTED FOR HITLER? by Richard F. Hamilton. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 664 pp. Cloth $50.00; paper $16.50.

Strange that after the passage of half a century and the publication of over a hundred books, there still should be something factually new to say about Adolf Hitler's road to power. Richard Hamilton, professor of sociology at McGill University, is attempting to do just that in raising the question, "Who voted for Hitler?"

In order to find an answer, he painstakingly analyzed and compared the election results of the Weimar period, particularly those of the three key elections to the Reichstag (Germany's parliament) after the onset of the Great Depression—those of September 1930, July 1932, and November 1932. The Nazi movement initially had peaked in 1923, the chaotic year of astronomic inflation, with the failed Bierkeller putsch in Munich. But in the years between the currency stabilization of November 1923 and the Reichstag election of 1928, Hitler's party (the NSDAP—National Socialist German Workers' Party) had dwindled to an insignificant splinter group polling 2.6 percent of the total vote. Two years later, that figure jumped to an unexpected 18 percent, with the Nazis taking second place, behind the Social Democrats who had polled 24 percent. Within two years, in the July 1932 election, the Nazi party's share of the vote reached its zenith, with over 37 percent, surpassing the combined vote of the Social Democratic and Communist left (36 percent). During those same four years, the share of the two conservative bourgeois parties had shrunk from 23 percent to 7 percent.

From where did this tremendous increase in the Nazi vote come? Hamilton questions the common assumption that it was primarily cast by the lower-middle class, and he sets out to prove that its bulk was cast by the upper and upper-middle classes. If he were right, a substantial revision of our theories about fascism would be in order. But is he right, and to what extent?

Hamilton defines two key factors contributing to Nazi strength that have long been known, if not always fully appreciated: one, Germany's small-town and village communities; the other, Protestantism. He establishes, using available research data, that "the vote for the National Socialists [Nazis] varied inversely with the size of the communities." Those with less than 25,000 inhabitants (accounting for one-half of the total vote in the key election of July 1932) show the heaviest share of the Nazi vote, 41 percent; that share drops to 32 percent in cities with a population of over 100,000 —while in some smaller towns and villages it reached the 80 percent range. These figures alone speak against Hamilton's assumption, for in the small communities, the lower-middle class is numerically predominant. In order to make his theory fit this fact, he resorts to the rather lame argument that in these small towns, lower-class people followed the lead of upper-class "opinion makers."

The second key factor affecting Nazi strength—religious affiliation or, rather, Protestantism—also was strongest in small communities, with their more uniform religious structure, but is also noticeable in big cities. Two parts of Bavaria illustrate the point: Catholic Lower Bavaria showed a Nazi vote of 20 percent against 40 percent in heavily Protestant Franconia, where in some smaller towns it went as high as 83 percent.

In the larger cities, generally, the substantial workers' vote for the two major parties of the left, the Social Democrats and the Communists, changes the picture somewhat. Still, the difference in the Nazis' share of the vote between predominantly Catholic and heavily Protestant cities runs 10–15 percent. Since in Germany adherence to both Catholicism and Protestantism is spread across all social classes, this proves that class alone was not the decisive factor, and that religion, or rather the Catholic religion, seems to have provided an effective antidote to nazism in many places.

In his attempt to determine the social locus of the Nazi vote in the largest cities, Hamilton subjects the voting records of some of them, insofar as available, to a detailed analysis. He tries to segregate voting districts by class: districts of workers; of mixed workers/lower-middle class; of mixed upper/upper-middle class. Where the figures allow sufficient interpretation, Hamilton detects a fairly uniform picture: the Nazi vote reached its highest share in the upper-middle-class areas, while in most lower-middle and working-class districts (often inseparably intermingled) it tended to stay below the city average.

LOOKING AT THE OVERALL RECORD of those years, Hamilton's diagnosis, at best, can be said to apply



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the period of the initial rise of the Nazi vote, from May 1928 to September 1930. In those two years, the drop in the upper/upper-middle-class vote for the two conservative bourgeois parties covers three-quarters of the Nazi gain. During the next two years, up to the July 1932 Reichstag election, the picture changes rapidly. Of the 19 percent gain in the Nazi share of the vote not more than 4 percent can be charged to a further drop in the total conservative vote. This leaves the social origin of 15 percent—5.5 million voters—to be accounted for. In the big cities, all three kinds of voting districts—upper-middle-class, mixed, and working-class—show by and large an even advance of 80–100 percent. (Only 25 percent in Catholic Munich!)

Undoubtedly, this rise in the Nazi vote was bolstered by defections from the working class, especially from among the unemployed. But as the combined total of the Social Democratic and Communist vote dropped only slightly, even increased in some of the larger cities, the bulk of the Nazis' gains in the July 1932 election (and probably already in some measure in the election of September 1930) can only be explained by their appeal to nonvoters, most likely members of the lower-middle class then politicized by the economic crisis. Indeed, from May 1928 to July 1932, voter participation had increased from 75 percent to 84 percent. Taking into account all these circumstances, I find it difficult to accept Hamilton's thesis of upper-middle-class predominance in the Nazi vote. This, definitely, does not apply for the decisive period after 1930.

HOWEVER ONE MAY DIFFER with his interpretation, Hamilton's systematic analysis of big-city voting statistics sheds some light on an admittedly difficult area. His book has other values too. One is his definition and brief critique of the three major theories put forward by social scientists to explain the Nazi phenomenon. What he labels the "Centrist" theory essentially sees the source of nazism in the structural changes within advanced capitalist societies, with their particularly damaging effect on the lower-middle class, including the proletarization of white-collar employees. The reaction of these groups to such changes was exacerbated by the economic crisis, by hurt national pride, hatred of the Jews, and threats to established cultural values.

Second, Hamilton speaks of the Marxist theory. It also centers on the role of the lower-middle class, and sees it as unable to act, except as adjunct to either the working class or the capitalist class. In this view, the Nazi movement was funded and directed by Big Capital.

Third, Hamilton outlines the "Mass Society" theory, characterized by "phrases [such as] uprooted population, atomization of society . . . urbanization and consequent anomie . . . loneliness." In their despair and anxiety, according to this argument, the masses tend to follow demagogues promising easy solutions.

In his critique of these theories, Hamilton makes several valid points. Countering the "Centrists'" assumption that structural changes have resulted in widespread loss of social position, he points to a mixed pattern of crosscurrents—such as impoverished peasants leaving the countryside for better jobs in the city, or new opportunities for white-collar employees in the growing organizational sector. Questioning the Marxists' simplistic picture of fascism as the tool of Big Capital, he cites the evident reluctance of leading industrialists to put Hitler in charge. And he maintains that the "Mass Society" theory fails insofar as it targets the urban masses, while the big Nazi inroads were made in small towns and villages, places rather safe from urban anomie and uprootedness.

HAMILTON'S OWN THEORY, unfortunately, seems somewhat diffuse and eclectic. Perhaps this is so because it is closely tied to the specific historic baggage carried by the German society and the crosscurrents of post-World War I events, of which he shows an intimate knowledge: the complex struggle that led the Reich from the never acknowledged defeat in World War I and a half-hearted revolution, through the collapse of the currency and a brief spectacular recovery, to a worldwide economic crisis that was to prove fatal to an all too weakly rooted democratic republic.

Hamilton correctly assesses the ambiguous role of the leading industrialists. Throughout the last years of the Weimar Republic they believed they could tame the Nazis by setting them up in a coalition government, not realizing that Hitler—anxious by 1932 to come to power "legally"—was not willing to continue sharing it with anyone else, and that they would have to accept a severely constricted role in the totalitarian state. Their relationship to the Nazis, as Hamilton makes clear, was far from the Marxists' master/servant image. As late as December 1932, a vast majority of prominent business leaders refused to sign an appeal to President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler to the chancellorship. Hitler, in turn, within months after coming to power in January 1933, dissolved their parties, controlled their economic organiza-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions, and forced them to accept severe limitations on dividends and a doubling of corporate income taxes.

The author stresses the nefarious role of the officers' corps that was still largely recruited from the aristocracy. On the other hand, he tends to overlook or neglect some of the important ways in which the old societal structures had been left untouched by the revolution and the Weimar Republic. There still were the large landowners east of the Elbe River; there still was the cult of "the State" as an anointed entity high above "mere" society, a cult that elevated the lowliest bureaucratic civil servant above the common citizen; there was the survival of the authoritarian spirit and of class segregation in the educational system as well as, perhaps worst of all, in the judicial system, which systematically backed the Nazi leaders and their hoodlums.

Hamilton correctly describes the spirit of the workers' organizations in the final months: the dispirited Social Democratic leadership giving up Prussia, its last political bastion, without a fight; the Communist party, in the vain hope of gaining new adherents from the Nazis' radical wing, making common cause with them in order to bring down the center-left Prussian government, turning in the end to a crudely nationalist and anti-Semitic campaign; and the trade union leadership, after Hitler's takeover, offering their cooperation to the Arbeitsfront, the Nazi labor organization—an offer rudely answered by the unions' dissolution in May 1933.

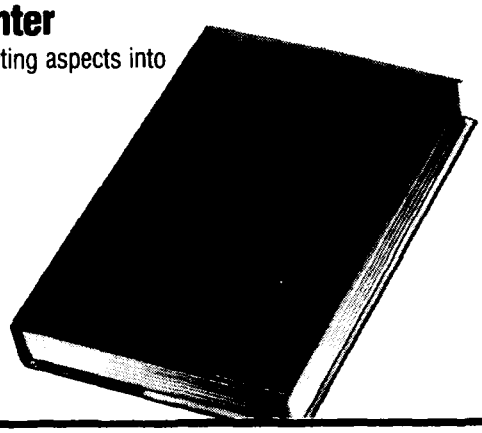
The book fails, however, to convey fully the chaotic conditions that characterized the republic's last years: government rule by decree under the last three chancellors; a latent civil war in which the Nazis' paramilitary organizations, protected by the courts, had the upper hand over their counterparts on the left. The meaning of elections, under such circumstances, became symbolic rather than political. For Hitler, in particular, the aim of an election was not to enter into a parliamentary coalition, but rather to gain sufficient votes in order to force old President Hindenburg to name him chancellor and put him into power. After that, it would not take him long to establish totalitarian control. □


# Culture and crisis in Weimar Germany

Drawing on personal experience, Henry Pachter blends social history and cultural criticism in essays that capture the spirit of Germany's ill-fated first republic. "A very fine and illuminating analysis."—Richard Löwenthal (Portions of this book first appeared in *Dissent*.) Illustrated, $19.95

**WEIMAR ETUDES • Henry Pachter**

"A serious attempt at synthesizing Benjamin's conflicting aspects into a monumental intellect that's only now beginning to cast long, deep shadows."—*Kirkus Reviews*
"First-rate."—*Frederic Jameson*
$19.95



At your bookstore or direct from
**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS**
136 South Broadway, Irvington, N.Y. 10533


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# LETTERS

## Good Things Ahead?

Editors:

Michael Harrington argues persuasively in his article in *Dissent*, Fall 1982 ["A Path for America"] that we will soon be entering the age of social democracy in America. The failure of Reagan's policies to end the recession is becoming apparent to everyone. Indeed, his Take from the Poor and Give to the Military policies have only made matters worse and brought on much unnecessary suffering. People are going to demand in the late 1980s and 1990s that something directly be done about unemployment. Social democratic policies will be enacted whereby closed factories and industries will be reopened under nationalized ownership, under democratic participation by the workers and consumers. In addition, a much needed and far-ranging social welfare and social security system will be constructed that will address and deal with the problems of our poor and needy in a way that our present system has totally failed to do.

As Michael Harrington has correctly pointed out, this coming stage of social democracy is regrettably not democratic socialism. The majority of industries will still be under capitalist ownership, nor will there be complete economic equality and the abolition of classes. But it will be an important step on the road to democratic socialism.

Not only are socialists predicting some radical changes ahead, but even some members of the Reagan administration can read the writing on the wall. David R. Gergen, for example, Reagan's assistant for communications, said at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce luncheon, "If we do not succeed in this term or next, we will not go back to the Great Society programs, but something much further to the left" (*News-Journal Papers*, Oct. 22, 1982, p. A-7).

What concerns me is who will be the leaders that will be willing to go beyond the Great Society programs, and espouse and campaign on an explicitly social democratic platform? The present leaders of the Democratic party—Kennedy, Mondale, Tsongas, etc.—certainly aren't willing now—nor are they very likely to be in the future. They are liberals, not socialists, and social democracy is just too radical for them, and no matter how much support democratic socialists give them, this is not likely to change. Supporting liberal politicians in the Democratic party is not going to do anything to advance social democratic ideas.

In order to get social democratic ideas before the American people it is going to be necessary to either support people in the Democratic party willing to run on explicitly social democratic platforms, or build a socialist third party. I support the latter alternative, because I believe the liberals, let alone the moderates and conservatives in the Democratic party, would kill any such social democratic proposals before they could become part of that party's platform, and stop any socialist from being nominated for president. A socialist third party suffers from no such constraints and, indeed, will be the only party willing to bring a social democratic program before the American people. Beyond that, a socialist third party would be more likely to preserve the movement to go beyond social democracy to the stage of economic democracy, with the revolutionary abolition of capitalism, the establishment of genuine democratic socialism, and the end of social classes.

DONALD F. BUSKY
Philadelphia, Pa. □

## New Deal and Socialists

Editors:

Theda Skocpol in her article "Legacies of New Deal Liberalism" (*Dissent*, Winter 1983) asks us to put aside our "practical liberalism" in favor of a "social democracy"—which presumably will be neither practical nor liberal yet nevertheless of use. This "social democracy" is said to be guided by "a vision of American democratic politics committed to using public authority to regenerate industrial development . . . and committed to ensuring economic security and cultural opportunities for *all* Americans. . . . " The inspirational qualities of this call last as long as you can avoid trying to figure out what it means in detail. It has all the force of a cliché.

We are told that a truly radical program of "democratic planning" (even if it cannot safely be called "radical" in public) will require "basic changes in U.S. political arrangements." Such changes should, we are told, include three "reforms": (1) a reorganization of congressional elections "to encourage representatives . . . to support sustained party programs in the interests of broad, national alliances of social groups"; (2) a reorganization of political parties to enhance communication between the grass-roots and elected officials about policy proposals and their implementation; (3) an extension of political participation to accompany the called-for expansion of public authority.

These reforms, too, sound inspiring—until you begin to wonder what exactly is being recommended. How are all these nice things going to happen? What actual changes in congressional election laws should be made? What precisely should we do to our parties to encour-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

age communication? How in fact do we broaden political participation? To say that Skocpol's proposals are vague is to pay them a compliment.

More than vagueness is at stake; there is this matter of practicality. The "practical liberals" of the New Deal are said by Professor Skocpol to have been mistaken in attaching their recommendations to "traditional American individualist values." Skocpol doesn't address the obvious implication that their "practical" sense must have told these liberals that only such a presentation would appeal to the great body of American voters (just those voters who would make up Skocpol's own "broad, national alliances of social groups"). Instead, she would have us believe that a departure from these still popular and still traditional values will secure social democrats their success with the American electorate and also assure the invulnerability of social democratic programs "to conservative counterpressures."

The reader, I believe, should be forgiven a certain doubt in the face of such splendid optimism. Where is the evidence for Skocpol's faith? When did the American people repudiate their tradition of individualism? Why are they likely to do so under the auspices of radical social democrats?

One could more convincingly argue, citing the same historical evidence brought to our attention by Dr. Skocpol, that "the New Deal's *halfway* victories" (my emphasis) were genuine victories and were due to the very practicality of its liberalism so scorned by the good professor. If this is so, then a departure from such practicality would dismiss half a loaf in favor of no loaf at all, a good idea only if you have tenure. Most Americans don't.

Socialists dream on!

BILL JOHNSTON, JR.
Wallingford, Pa. □

## Wanted: A Foreign Policy

Editors:

I read, with much interest and respect, the argument by Theda Skocpol in your Winter 1983 issue. She makes a very eloquent plea for a social democratic policy in the U.S. I, however, have difficulty with the article on one point, namely U.S. foreign policy. Skocpol does not include anything about a possible restructuring of U.S. foreign policy in her article.

My question is: Is it possible to have a "social democratic" foreign policy? My own answer would be "no." The reason for this is that the U.S. is an imperialist power abroad (but not at home—hence the room for reasonable reforms within the U.S.). I think that I can be wrong on this point and since Skocpol did such a fine job in arguing for the possibilities of a social democratic policy within the U.S., I would very much appreciate if she could briefly do the same for foreign policy.

RICHARD SWEDBERG
Cambridge, Mass. □

## On Elshtain–Ehrenreich

Editors:

As proud a feminist and as strong an advocate of plain-speaking as I am, I think a debate has gone too far when two of the handful of articulate feminist theorists go at each other like the lady mud wrestlers you come across on late-night TV. Sarcasm, jibes about academic appointments or the lack of them, stabs at writing style, and the bandying about of Jim Jones and Jean's grandmother move this discussion out of the realm of the serious and into the realm of the embarrassing. And it advances the examinations of these very real questions not one bit—fourteen columns of overly personal hair-pulling, hurt feelings, and (worse) stereotypical "female" hysteria only lend conviction to those who still watch discussions of feminism and the family with skepticism or contempt.

As my mother, father, and the day-care coordinator all used to say, "I don't *care* who started it. . . ."

LIZ WELCH
New York City □

## Concession Bargaining

Editors:

David Bensman's "Concession Bargaining in Steel" (*Dissent*, Winter 1983) is an excellent analysis of the concessions process at Steelworkers Local 65. It misrepresents, however, the nature of the UAW's contracts with Ford and General Motors and the possibilities for concession bargaining in general.

Bensman praises the UAW's "steps to gain 'job security'" through experimental "lifetime employment" projects and limited bans on plant closings. The shortcomings of the "lifetime employment" project have recently come to light. In exchange for guaranteeing that the top 80 percent of the work force at its



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chicago assembly plant would be reduced only through attrition, Ford demanded the right to use part-timers, eliminate relief workers, no restrictions on mandatory Saturday overtime, an extremely harsh "Industrial Incompatibility Attendance Program" combining several skilled trades classifications, and a committee to "selectively screen" laid-off workers for call-backs, thus undercutting seniority. In return, the top 80 percent would be guaranteed a job *either with Ford or elsewhere*, and the right to a short work week (and short pay) if production schedules were cut. UAW members there voted down the proposal by a 4:1 margin, and neither of the other two Ford plants that were to get "lifetime security" have agreed on a proposal. It may have looked good on paper. . . . But when it comes down to cases, we find that Ford insists upon language guaranteeing its right to cut the work force, and to destroy long-held working conditions for those who remain.

There is a similar catch in the language on plant closings. The only closings prohibited (and only for two years) are those attributable to "outsourcing." The company is free to "outsource" at will, as long as no plant is completely closed. GM's plan to buy 200,000 subcompacts from Isuzu and its recent deal with Toyota—both legal under the contract—will cost American jobs. The point here is not to berate the UAW for failing to win control over GM's investment plans—how could it, when it was making concessions—but that the 1982 concessions contracts are by no means steps toward job security.

Most important, though, is the effect the UAW's concessions had on the rest of the U.S. labor movement. The union's second set of concessions to Chrysler, though mandated by the Federal Loan Guarantee Board, set off a wave of concessions in other unions. Its third set, in January 1981, started an avalanche. And when concessions were made to profitable GM in April '82, the word was out that anybody could get concessions. Many staffers from other unions told me: "After Chrysler, everything changed."

Finally, Bensman seems to hold out the possibility that in the process of making concessions unions can make big gains: "If workers are to benefit from concession bargaining [he writes], they must gain some control over decisions about capital investment and new technology." The notion that workers are going to win new, innovative breakthroughs in exchange for concessions is not being borne out in practice. It also flies in the face of everything we know about power relations between labor and management. If at the time of negotiations a company has enough power to force the union to make concessions, then surely it has the power to hold on to its old management prerogatives. The concessions offensive is not about companies coming hat in hand to the big strong unions asking for help; it's about the companies trying to weaken unions—and thus far succeeding. In many ways the companies are weakened—by foreign competition, and by debt. But in the area of labor relations they're not weak. They have a plan, and labor is weak. The idea that the two parties could sit down cooperatively on the basis of concessions and work out an accommodation beneficial to both sides is a fantasy at best, dangerous at worst.

To quote Tom Tormey, a speaker at the November '82 *Labor Notes* conference (I attended, as I cover the auto and steel unions for *Labor Notes*): "Negotiation is a process of coercion. They try to coerce us and we try to coerce them. We can't soft-soap them into giving us anything. We never could and never will."

JANE SLAUGHTER
Detroit □

## Corrections

- The first paragraph on p. 179 of our Spring 1983 issue—part of "Industrializing Our Universities" by Irwin Stark—should have read: "Culliton offers the example of Cesar Milstein, who with a colleague was credited with the invention of monoclonal antibodies and who in sharing the cells with others asked that they not seek patents on the basis of his work. 'The scientific ethos,' Culliton concludes, 'is incompatible with the definition of technology as private property.'"
- On p. 236 of the same issue, in "The Graying of the Intellectuals," Russell Jacoby meant to list among some contributors to a memorial volume for Paul Baran not Bruno but *Charles Bettelheim*, the French economist. □

## Volunteering

Editors:

Michael Walzer, in his article "Socialism and the Gift Relationship" (*Dissent*, Fall 1982), seemed to be putting the stamp of approval on current volunteerism at a time when budget-cutting in the human services is causing louder drumbeating for unpaid workers.

We are reminded that laid-off workers in industry will need to enter the social-service sector for survival jobs in the coming years. Shouldn't we be taking a closer look at the points feminists made ten years ago in rejecting that form of "self-exploitation"? One is always surprised at the relative conservatism and sentimentality of young activists who sound like true Reaganites in preferring small but splendid local health and service efforts staffed by themselves and people in their neighborhoods, and resisting "public provision." . . .

DORIS B. GOLD
Queens, New York □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Democracy and Dictatorship in Latin America



A special publication devoted entirely to the voices and opinions of writers from Latin America

Published by the Foundation for the Independent Study of Social Ideas/$5

Octavio Paz
Jorge Edwards
Carlos Franqui
Enrique Krauze
José Miguel Oviedo
Rodolfo Pastor
Carlos Rangel
Gabriel Zaid
Juan E. Corradi
Dialogues with
Ernesto Sabáto

**Order from F.S.I.S.I.**
**521 Fifth Avenue, N.Y. 10017**
**Price for bundle orders on request.**

521 Fifth Avenue New York, N.Y. 10017

Donald C Bacheller
117 75th St
North Bergen NJ 07047

1-s/

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED